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The SOVIET UNION and a Middle East Settlement

Novosti Press Agency Publishing House

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Questions and Answers

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Publishers' Note

The resident of any country in the world these days, after unfolding a daily newspaper, is sure to find a report from the Middle East. The Middle East conflict is the most protracted and bloody regional conflict raging on our planet today. The absence of a settlement not only has the most negative impact on the situation of states and peoples in the region, but also poses a grave threat to world peace. This flash-point of permanently dangerous tension in the Middle East adversely affects the political climate in the world and hampers the establishment of just international economic relations.

Most of the Western mass media which are to a certain extent connected with Zionist circles are distorting the actual state of affairs in the Middle East in every possible way. They are trying to whitewash Israel's aggressiveness and expansionism, minimise Washington's support for Tel Aviv and at the same time slander the Arab, above all Palestinian, national-liberation struggle, and misrepresent Soviet policy in the Middle East.

The booklet we are offering our reader was written by Soviet experts on Middle East problems. It contains answers to the most burning questions of the day, which were put to Soviet representatives in Arab, Western and other countries by people from every walk of life and of every shade of opinion who are interested in the problems of a Middle East settlement and the USSR's stand on this issue.

The authors of the booklet are aware that some of the questions come from people influenced by the Western and pro-Israeli propaganda, which distorts the actual Soviet stand on a Middle East settlement. In such cases they try to clarify it as fully and convincingly as possible.

The USSR's Approach to the Range of Middle East Problems

What are the basic principles that determine the Soviet Union's approach to Middle East problems?

The Soviet Union's stand on Middle East problems is an integral part of its general policy in the international arena which is aimed at maintaining universal peace and security, strengthening international detente, preventing a thermonuclear war, and supporting the peoples' struggle for national liberation and social progress. An important component of this policy is the struggle for the elimination of dangerous flash-points of tension, in particular, those in the Middle East, that imperil peace. In pursuing this policy, the Soviet Union stands, as General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Mikhail Gorbachev stressed, "for the recognition of each and every people's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the right to decide upon its own road, for the non-violation of this right by anyone, for the absence of any attempts at outside interference, for the triumph of liberty and not tyranny".

The Soviet Union does not seek any unilateral privileges, benefits, or mercenary advantages for itself in the Middle East. It does not aim to proclaim the Middle East a sphere of its vital interests, nor is it going to set up military bases or form military blocs there. It does not intend to get profits from Arab oil or other natural riches of the region, just as it has no intention of dictating its will to the peoples or influencing the internal development of the states in the region. The Soviet Union acts firmly and consistently in the interests of maintaining normal relations with all Middle East states without exception, i.e., equitable and mutually beneficial relations that are based on mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and independence, and on non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

The USSR has never had a biassed attitude towards any of the Middle East countries because of its political system or its people's way of life. The USSR has no intention to impose its views and ideology on the countries of the region. The Soviet Union views the religious convictions of people with unwavering respect, whether they profess Islam or any other religion.

At the same time, it is only natural that the Soviet state is far from being indifferent to developments in the region, since any armed clashes or other conflicts, which are taking place there, directly or indirectly affect the security of its southern frontiers and that of its allies.

Unfortunately, it must be pointed out that for nearly forty years now the Middle East has been a permanent hotbed of tension. It has lived through quite a few outbreaks of bloody wars, and armed clashes have never ceased in the region.

It is no secret that the explosive situation that continues to exist there is a direct consequence of the policy of imperialist circles, above all the United States, and the unceasing expansion and aggression of Israel against the Arab states and peoples which they are encouraging. Crudely violating the universally recognised norms of international law and the appropriate resolutions of the Security Council and other bodies of the UN, Israel, which relies on the United States' all-round support and assistance, is pursuing a policy aimed at legalising its occupation of Arab territories, securing its hold on them, and forcing its will and diktat upon the Arabs.

The Soviet Union resolutely condemns these territorial claims by Israel, regarding them as unlawful and illicit. In the USSR's opinion, this is nothing more than undisguised international banditry. It is no wonder, therefore, that the USSR's sympathies

and support are with the just cause of the Arab peoples, who are fighting against imperialist aggression for their territorial integrity, national sovereignty, freedom, and social progress.

It is the Soviet Union's firm conviction that the unstable situation in the Middle East will continue until the causes of the conflict existing in the region are removed, specifically, until the unlawful Israeli occupation of Arab territories is stopped and the Arab people of Palestine are given an opportunity to exercise their inalienable national rights, above all their right to self-determination and the formation of their own independent state. To delay reaching such a settlement means to ignore the destinies of the countries and peoples of the region and the destiny of world peace and security.

The Soviet Union has always resolutely opposed and continues to oppose any attempts to solve the Middle East problem through an imperialistic imposition of will, defeatist anti-Arab deals, and the sellout of Arab peoples' vital interests. Military confrontation between Israel and the Arab states has not brought, nor can it bring, peace and quiet to the peoples of the Middle East, and it has not brought nearer, nor can it bring nearer, a final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Soviet Union is convinced that all controversial issues must be resolved in a peaceful way at a specially convened international conference with the equal participation of all interested parties.

It may be argued that such an approach by the Soviet Union limits the rights, stipulated in the UN Charter, of every state and people to fight using every available means against outside aggression in defence of its national rights and interests. The USSR believes that the support of a political settlement does not in any way mean the renunciation of the struggle

against the aggressor and the imperialist forces supporting it. On the contrary, the fair and durable character of a settlement reached by political means entirely depends on how firm and steadfast Arab resistance to imperialist schemes and Israel's aggression will be.

What is the Soviet Union's attitude to Resolution 242 of the UN Security Council of November 22, 1967?[1]

The Soviet Union, which seconded this resolution, regards it as the international legal basis upon which efforts towards reaching a comprehensive and fair settlement in the Middle East should be built. In taking this view, it proceeds from the fact that this resolution, adopted soon after Israel's aggression against the neighbouring Arab states in June 1967, asserts as a basic principle in settling the conflict the inadmissibility of acquiring foreign territories by acts or threats of force and provides for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all occupied Arab territories as one of the principal conditions for establishing a truly lasting peace in the region.

From the Soviet Union's point of view, the right of the Middle East states "to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries", stipulated in Resolution 242, cannot serve as a pretext for Israel's retaining control of any part of the Arab territories captured during the aggression. Only a complete restitution by Israel of the occupied territories can create the conditions necessary for protecting the right of all states in the region to an independent and secure existence.

At the same time, this resolution does not cover all aspects of the Middle East conflict; specifically, it mentions the Palestine problem only in terms of its humanitarian side, even though it is obvious that there cannot be a lasting peace in the Middle East without the solution of the Palestine problem in its entirety. That is why in 1980 the international community represented by the UN expressed "its grave concern ... that Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967 does not provide for the future and for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the attainment of which is a *conditio sine qua non* for a just solution of the question of Palestine". At the same time the UN General Assembly confirmed the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, previously set forth in its Resolution 3236 of November 22, 1974.

Why is Resolution 181 (II) of the UN General Assembly on the partition of Palestine so often mentioned of late in statements by Soviet leaders?[1]

[1] *Resolution 242 of the UN Security Council of November 22, 1967*, provides for a comprehensive solution of the Middle East problems. It aims at establishing there "a just and lasting peace in which every state in the area can live in security". The resolution emphasises the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war. In conformity with this principle, the resolution demands the "withdrawal of Israel's armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict", as well as the "termination of all claims or states of war and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries free from threats or acts of force". The resolution further states the necessity to ensure freedom of navigation on international waterways in the region and to reach a fair settlement of the refugee problem.

[1] Resolution 181 (II) of the UN General Assembly of November 29, 1947, adopted on the recommendation of the majority of members of the UN Special Committee on Palestine, provided for the partition of the mandated territory of Palestine into two independent states, a Jewish and an Arab state, and also the formation of the city of Jerusalem and its environs as a separate territorial unit (*corpus separatum*) enjoying a special international status. The Jewish state was allotted a territory with an area of 14,100 sq km (56 per cent of the territory of Palestine) and a population of 498,000 Jews and 497,000 Arabs; the Arab state was allotted 11,100 sq km (43 per cent of the territory of

The reasons for this should apparently be sought first of all in the principles set forward in this resolution. The main reason the Soviet Union at that time seconded this UN resolution was that, in contrast to the various alternative solutions to the question of Palestine brought forward at the time, it stated the need to terminate Great Britain's Mandate for Palestine and put an end to the British military occupation, and recognised the right of Palestinian Arabs and Jews to national self-determination and the formation of their own independent state. Unfortunately, only that part of the resolution has been fulfilled which related to the formation of a Jewish state. The resolution still remains unfulfilled in respect of establishing a Palestinian Arab state.

At the present moment, the main obstacle to the formation of a Palestinian state is Israel's obstructionist stand which is supported and encouraged in every possible way by the United States.

"This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their independent state is unassailable," stressed the State of Israel Proclamation of Independence. Hardly anybody would contest this today. Is it right, however, to apply one kind of yardstick to the State of Israel and a completely different one to the Arab people of Palestine? Yet this is precisely the approach that has been taken by both Israel and the United Sates which are denying not only the Palestinian

Palestine) with a population of 725,000 Arabs and 10,000 Jews. The enclave of Jerusalem was allotted a territory of 117 sq km with a population of 205,000 including 100,000 Jews.

Under the provisions of Resolution 181 (II), British troops were to withdraw from Palestine before August 1, 1948, and two months after their withdrawal the formation of an independent Arab state and an independent Jewish state was to be proclaimed and the international status for Jerusalem was to be introduced. These states and the city were to join in a single economic union.

Arabs' right to the formation of a state of their own, but also their right to self-determination in general. In this way the United States and Israel are stating, in effect, their rejection of Resolution 181 and undermining the legal and historical basis upon which Israel was built as an independent state.

The references to Resolution 181 of the UN General Assembly made by Soviet leaders reflect the principled character of the Soviet Union's stand on the essence of a Middle East settlement, rather than any changes in this stand. The Soviet Union explicitly stated its support for the establishment of two independent states—an Arab and a Jewish state—in Palestine by voting in favour of Resolution 181 in 1947. Later, after the State of Israel had already been established, it was the Soviet Union that repeatedly raised the question of the need to implement fully Resolution 181 and establish an independent Palestinian state. Suffice it to be recalled, for example, that the Soviet representative's address to the session of the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1949, expressed the hope that the United Nations would succeed in conquering the Anglo-American opposition and that it would be possible to put into effect the provisions regarding the creation of an independent Arab state in Palestine. Similarly, at present the Soviet Union firmly and consistently supports the Palestinian Arabs' rightful struggle for the realisation of their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of a state of their own, and views this as the key element of a just and comprehensive Middle East settlement.

Why does the USSR think that the PLO is the only legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine?

It is universally acknowledged that the Palestine problem is the pivotal one in the tangle of complicated questions in the Middle East conflict and that its solution calls for the exercise of the inalienable national rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including their right to self-determination, sovereignty and independence.

It goes without saying that this problem cannot be discussed and solved without the participation of representatives of the Arab people of Palestine. The question is: Who should represent the Palestinian Arabs and take part on their behalf in the process of a Middle East settlement?

The Soviet Union's answer to this question is well known: the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

This is by no means our point of view just for the present. It reflects the USSR's principled approach to the Palestine problem. The joint Soviet-Egyptian document, *Complete Unanimity*, published as early as October 19, 1974, stressed that the Soviet Union and Egypt "speak in favour of the independent participation of representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East on an equal basis with its other participants", thus recognising that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine.

It is quite obvious that such an appraisal of the PLO's role in establishing a just and lasting peace in the Middle East could not arise by itself. Undoubtedly, it was the attitude of the Palestinian people themselves to this organisation that was the main factor in the process of consolidation of the position of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine.

The vigorous struggle waged by the Palestinian patriots under the leadership of the PLO against Israeli aggression and for the national rights of their people won it ever broader support among the Arab people of Palestine, establishing this organisation as its political vanguard. What is particularly important is that the PLO is recognised as their governing body not only by those Palestinians who have been driven out of their homeland because of the Arab-Israeli wars and who are now refugees in neighbouring Arab countries, but also by those who are under the yoke of the Israeli occupation. The repeated attempts by Israeli authorities to find collaborationists and quislings among the population of the occupied Palestinian lands, who would be willing to act as an alternative to the PLO, invariably ended in failure.

The leading role of the PLO in the national-liberation movement of the Palestinian Arabs became particularly strong after the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967. The PLO and the combat detachments of the Palestine Resistance Movement (PRM), which are part of it, played an important role in overcoming the difficulties and the atmosphere of indecision and hopelessness that had emerged in the Arab world as a result of Israel's aggression. The heroic rebuff by the joint forces of Palestinian guerillas and formations of the Jordanian army near Karameh (Jordan) in 1968 was a bright and glorious page in the history of the Palestinian national-liberation movement. This battle roused the Arab peoples; it instilled them with a feeling of confidence in their own strength and in the possibility of successfully opposing the forces of aggression and imperialism.

A major factor in improving the PLO's status and prestige is the process of its transition to more realistic positions with respect to the problems of a

Middle East settlement. A special place in this process, no doubt, is occupied by the 12th session of the Palestine National Council (PNC) held in 1974, which set the task of creating a Palestinian "national government", i.e., a state in "any part of the Palestinian territory which will be liberated". This essentially implied the Palestinians' readiness to establish their own independent state on the West Bank of the Jordan River and in the Gaza Strip. The adoption of this programme undermined the basic points of the anti-Palestinian campaign, unleashed by Israel, which claim that the PLO aims its activity at destroying the State of Israel, and deprived the Israeli leadership of their main argument in justifying and disguising their aggressive policy of annexation in the international arena.

The resolution recognising the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine, adopted by the Conference of Arab Heads of State in Rabat in 1974, and the subsequent granting to it of the status of a full-fledged member of the League of Arab States consolidated the international positions of the PLO. The 29th Session of the UN General Assembly (1974) adopted a resolution, drafted by 72 non-aligned and socialist states, according to which the General Assembly, believing that the Palestinian people are the main party in the question of Palestine, invited the PLO as the representative of that people to take part in the discussion of the Palestine problem at the plenary sessions of the General Assembly. The PLO was invited to participate as an observer in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and in all international conferences convened under the auspices of the UN. At its next, 30th Session, the General Assembly resolved to invite the PLO to participate in such conferences on a par with the other participants. The PLO is also

taking an active part in the discussion of Middle East problems, including the question of Palestine, by the UN Security Council.

Thus the international community represented by the UN explicitly stated its endorsement of the need for the PLO's full-fledged participation in all efforts towards achieving a comprehensive and fair settlement in the Middle East. Only those who are guided by selfless purposes oppose this, those who would like to delete the Palestine problem and to force upon the Arabs, including the Palestinians, settlement terms on this problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict at large that would conform to the wishes of the aggressor and its patrons.

The Soviet Union believes that the question of the PLO's equal participation in international efforts towards a Middle East settlement, including the proposed international conference on the Middle East, is imperative, since there can be no settlement without the solution of the Palestine problem, and this cannot be solved without the PLO's participation.

The Palestinian Arabs are a people whose destiny others have always tried to decide their own way and for their own benefit. It is long overdue to give them an opportunity to decide how to live by themselves. It is for this opportunity, for this natural right of every people that the Palestinians are waging their valorous and dedicated struggle under the guidance of their vanguard and sole legitimate representative—the PLO.

The Soviet Union, which regards the PLO as a major detachment in the anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Middle East, firmly and consistently supports the PLO's participation on an equal basis with other parties in all phases of a Middle East settlement.

What is the Soviet Union's attitude to the State of Israel?

The Soviet Union at one time seconded the resolution of the UN General Assembly on the partition of Palestine into two independent states, a Jewish and an Arab state. Subsequently, in 1949 the USSR actively advocated the admission of Israel to the UN, proceeding from the view that the newly-formed state would follow a policy of peace; refrain from threats and acts of force with respect to the territorial integrity, inviolability, and political independence of neighbouring states and peoples and maintain good-neighbourly relations with them; and that it would do everything it could to ensure the implementation of the second part of the UN resolution to establish a Palestinian Arab state. As has been demonstrated by the day-to-day activities and policy of the Israeli ruling circles, however, international imperialism and Zionism from the very beginning incited this state to follow a path that is in contradiction with the interests of peace and security in the region and the interests of the Israeli people themselves. The rulers in Tel Aviv have opted for a policy of expansion and aggression against neighbouring Arab states and of ignoring the national rights of the Arab people of Palestine.

In the less than four decades that have passed since the establishment of Israel, the Middle East has been the arena of repeated armed clashes between that country and the Arab states. This includes the Palestinian war of 1948-1949; the 1956 tripartite aggression against Egypt; Israel's aggression against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in June 1967; the October 1973 war in the Middle East; and the Israeli aggression in Lebanon in June 1982. Today Israel still continues to occupy the Palestinian territories cap-

tured in 1967—the West Bank of the River Jordan and the Gaza Strip, and Syria's Golan Heights—and, relying on the puppet "South Lebanon Army" (SLA), has set up a so-called security belt under the military control of Israel in the south of that Arab country.

Enjoying the all-round support of the US imperialist circles, Israel continues to pursue an expansionist, aggressive policy towards the Arabs and keeps stepping up repressive measures against the population of the occupied Arab territories. It has unlawfully proclaimed Jerusalem its "one and indivisible" capital, extended Israeli jurisdiction to the Golan Heights, and is speeding up the building of militarised settlements in the occupied territories. The raids of the Israeli air force on the nuclear research centre in Baghdad and on the PLO headquarters in the suburbs of Tunis were flagrant acts of international banditry and piracy.

All these actions of the Israeli ruling circles have invariably been condemned by the Soviet Union. It has a clearly defined position on the question of who is responsible for stoking the dangerous hotbed of international tension in the Middle East and for the fact that the Arab-Israeli conflict remains unsettled. The responsibility rests with Israel and the forces behind it, above all US imperialism and international Zionism.

Of course, the adventurist and aggressive policy of Israel could not but affect the USSR's relations with that country. It was because of the military aggression against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan unleashed by Israel's rulers in June 1967 and the Israeli government's refusal to comply with the respective resolutions of the UN Security Council that the Soviet Union decided to break diplomatic relations

with it. These relations have not been resumed to this day.

The absence of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Israel, however, does not mean that the Soviet Union denies that state the right to exist. It has never questioned whether Israel should or should not be. The Soviet Union condemns the aggressive, expansionist policy of the ruling circles of that state and their obstructionist and chauvinist intolerance with respect to the Arab people of Palestine.

Soviet Proposals on the Middle East of July 29, 1984

What is the basis of the principles of the settlement brought forward by the Soviet Union?

Their basis is formed by the universally recognised norms of international law, the UN Charter, and appropriate resolutions by the UN on the situation in the Middle East and on Palestine.

The Soviet Union proceeds from the need to implement such basic principles of international relations as the sovereign equality of states, the inviolability of their borders and their territorial integrity, and the mutual renunciation of the use of force in settling disputes in order to eliminate the flash-point of tension in the Middle East. Above all, it is necessary to restore the rights and to respect the interests of the peoples, which were violated as a result of Israel's aggressive actions.

Since the point at issue is the settlement of the armed conflict, during which Israel captured and continues to hold substantial parts of the territories of neighbouring Arab states, it is necessary that the aggressor should vacate the occupied lands and transfer them to their original possessors. In other words, the universally acknowledged principle of the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by the use or threat of force, which formed the basis of Resolution 242 of the UN Security Council and which provides for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all the Arab territories occupied in the 1967 conflict, must be strictly observed.

Already at the Fifth Emergency Special Session of the UN General Assembly, convened on the initiative of the Soviet Union at the end of June 1967 to discuss the situation in the Middle East that had developed as a consequence of the Israeli aggression against three neighbouring Arab states, the international

community confirmed this principle when an overwhelming majority of UN members adopted two resolutions on Jerusalem, which called upon Israel to renounce any actions to annex the Arab part of the city of Jerusalem. In this way the General Assembly definitely and explicitly came out against recognising the results of the Israeli aggression. Secure and inviolable borders are, first of all, peaceful borders giving confidence that they will not be violated. It is naive and unrealistic to believe that anyone can ensure the inviolability of his borders or make them secure by capturing others' territories. Only a legitimate border recognised by all, especially by those who are on its both sides, is truly secure.

In the Soviet Union's opinion, another important element of peace in the Middle East, just as in any other part of the world, is the exercise by every people of its right to self-determination, national independence, and sovereignty. Only on this fundamental basis can a just solution of the Palestine problem, which is pivotal to the Middle East conflict, achieved.

After examining all aspects of the Palestine problem, the international community has confirmed more than once that the way to its solution is through the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights. Resolution 3236 of the UN General Assembly, as well as subsequent resolutions, unambiguously stipulate the right of these people to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent state. Moreover, the General Assembly endorsed the practical recommendations of the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which had been drafted on its instructions. Of course, in advancing its proposals the Soviet Union could not ignore

these recommendations and the well-known principles for solving the Palestine problem and achieving a Middle East settlement that were adopted by the Twelfth Summit Conference of Arab States in Fez in 1982.

A comprehensive Middle East settlement is needed to eliminate war and armed conflicts from the life of the region and to ensure that the peoples of the Middle East should live in peace and goodneighbourliness and should not be the object of imperialist interference. The peoples and states in the region should be provided with conditions for their free development and national rebirth so that they could build their relations in the spirit of goodneighbourliness and mutual understanding. This is what the Soviet proposals are aimed at.

The Soviet Union's proposals of July 29 concerning a Middle East settlement emphasise that it should be comprehensive. Could you clarify what this implies?

What is the primary requirement for a settlement that is fair, permanent, and durable? It should be comprehensive, that is, it should not leave unsolved a single problem resulting from the Arab-Israeli conflict. In addition, it should cover all the parties involved in the conflict. Leaving even one of the problems unsolved would mean preserving the roots of the conflict. The same is true concerning the attempts to remove any of the parties to the conflict from participation in the process of working out a settlement and in the settlement itself.

As is well known, Israel demands that its security be guaranteed and that the Arab states recognise its right to exist. The Arab countries, in turn, taking as their basis the joint position set forth in the Fez principles, demand the restitution of all Arab territories occupied by Israel, as well as the exercise of the

Palestinian Arab people's national rights, including the right to establish their own independent state on the West Bank of the River Jordan and in the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

It is also well known that the Arab-Israeli conflict resulted in quite a few humanitarian and economic problems, above all the problem of refugees, questions concerning the utilisation of water resources, and so on. The need to ensure a stable and lasting settlement and the fulfilment of mutual obligations assumed by the sides entails the issue of offering appropriate international guarantees.

Is it possible in any way to imagine a stable solution of the Middle East conflict if, for example, the security of Israel is supported by appropriate international guarantees, while the demand to withdraw Israeli troops from the occupied Arab lands is ignored or, on the contrary, if these territories are restituted while Israel's right to exist is not recognised?

Is it possible to expect a stable settlement if any one of the problems of the Arab-Israeli conflict remains unsolved, while all the other issues have been settled? It seems there is only one answer to these questions—"no".

Let us take, for example, the question of ensuring the freedom of navigation in the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba. Western experts, who analysed this question in the light of the separate Egyptian-Israeli treaty signed in March 1979, assert that this treaty actually solved the problem facing Israel of ensuring the safe passage of Israeli ships on these waterways. Perhaps this problem has been solved for today. It should be borne in mind, however, that the solution of the problem of navigation on these waterways falls under the competence not only of Egypt

and Israel; that there are other coastal states, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, which have their interests and rights here, and that the full freedom of navigation cannot be secured without taking all of these interests into account. The Egyptian-Israeli treaty considers this problem in the framework of bilateral relations between Egypt and Israel, and this type of solution cannot be regarded as anything other than a temporary one. It will become stable and long-term only after it is either joined by the other coastal states or is adjusted by mutual consent and agreement to include amendments required by the interests and rights of these coastal states in the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba.

Of course, not all of the questions relevant to a settlement are of equal significance: some of them are fundamental ones, while others accompany or derive from them. Yet it can be stated with confidence that a comprehensive Middle East settlement will become possible only after the following three fundamental provisions are fulfilled: the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967, the exercise of the right of the Arab people of Palestine to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent state, and the recognition of the right of all states in the region to free and independent existence and development.

The Middle East settlement should be just. What does this mean from the Soviet Union's viewpoint?

One of the main factors of ensuring a long-term and stable settlement in the Middle East is the demand that it should be just for all the sides involved in the Middle East conflict, including the Arab people of Palestine and Israel.

Of course, it may be argued that the notion of justice is a rather relative one and that each side has

its own idea of justice. This probably might be the case if universally recognised norms of international law and the United Nations and its Charter did not exist. The world community has accumulated a great deal of experience in settling conflicts and disputes in intergovernmental and international relations. This makes it possible to give very clear-cut and well-grounded definitions of the concepts of "justice" and "just". After all, nobody doubts, for example, truths that are as incontestable as the following ones: the struggle of any state or people against outside aggression is just; the demands by any state or people to put an end to aggression and eliminate its consequences, including foreign occupation, are just; justice requires that every people exercise the inalienable national right to self-determination, freedom and independence. Justice demands that an aggressor should not be given an opportunity to reap the fruits of his aggression and turn them into an object of political bargaining.

Still another criterion of justice in resolving conflict situations is, undoubtedly, the need to take account of the legitimate rights and interests of the respective sides in a conflict.

The Soviet Union's position on settling the Arab-Israeli conflict has been and continues to be just and balanced. As early as May 1947, in addressing the First Special Session of the UN General Assembly during the discussion of the question of Palestine, the head of the Soviet delegation pointed out that neither the historic past, nor the conditions prevailing in Palestine at that time could justify any unilateral solution of the Palestine problem. Neither of the extreme decisions—the establishment of only a Jewish or only an Arab state—would achieve an equitable solution of this complicated problems especially since neither would ensure the settlement of

relations between the Arabs and the Jews inhabiting Palestine.

An equitable solution can be reached only if sufficient consideration is given to the interests of either side. The Soviet Union continues to adhere to this fundamental stand which was clearly expressed in its proposals of July 29, 1984.

There is no Arab state of Palestine on the political map of the Middle East in spite of the fact that nearly 40 years have passed since the resolution to this effect was adopted by the UN. The question, therefore, arises whether any state, particularly any one of those that at one time seconded the UN resolution on the partition of Palestine, can deny the fairness of the demand to establish an independent Palestinian Arab state. Regrettably, it has to be admitted that this proves to be possible.

Let us take, for example, the United States. The central point of its position on the Palestine problem is the attempt to eliminate any possibility of creating an independent Palestinian state. US diplomacy was pursuing these ends in 1948-1949 by sabotaging in every way the implementation of all the provisions of the UN resolution on the partition of Palestine. The US-inspired Camp David accords which provided for a restricted "administrative autonomy" for the Palestinians under the heel of the Israeli aggressor completely ignored the inalienable national rights of the Arab people of Palestine to self-determination, sovereignty, and independence. The "Reagan Plan" which is now actively being forced upon the Arabs as the only way towards solving the Palestine problem is not much different from the Camp David pattern either: even the authors themselves make no secret of its apparent anti-Palestinian orientation.

In setting forth this "plan" in his well-known address to the nation on September 1, 1982, President Reagan stressed that "peace cannot be achieved by the formation of an independent Palestinian state in those territories" (i.e., the Palestinian territories, namely, the West Bank of the River Jordan and the Gaza Strip.—*Authors' note*). Thus, according to the US administration's approach, a just and durable peace in the Middle East—for which, incidentally, it is incessantly and loudly calling—should be based on the violation of the inalienable rights of one of the main sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict—the Arab people of Palestine. It is quite obvious that such a basis has nothing in common with justice and completely contradicts the relevant UN resolutions on this issue.

A peace built on aggression, on the seizure of other peoples' lands and in defiance of peoples' national aspirations cannot be fair. Hence, neither can it be durable. Mankind's conscience cannot be reconciled with the fact that the Palestinian Arabs have for many years been persecuted and victimised and that nearly five million Palestinians are deprived of shelter, land, and home.

The proposals put forward by the USSR on July 29, 1984, set forth the principles of a comprehensive Middle East settlement which, in its opinion, are just for all who are involved in the Middle East conflict.

They are just for the Arab states which have been subjected to Israeli aggression, because they envision the restitution of their territories occupied since 1967 and the reinstatement of their sovereignty over these territories. This would put an end to the state of war between Israel and neighbouring Arab states. The peoples of the Arab countries would be given an opportunity to concentrate their energies and resources on solving the problems of their economic and social development and on eliminating the backwardness they inherited from the colonial period. The Arab states would also be able to play a more significant role in international affairs.

These principles are just for the Arab people of Palestine, because they provide for the exercise of their inalienable national rights, above all the right to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent state. This would put an end to their existence as an outcast people, take them out of refugee camps, and liberate them from the oppression of the occupationists. The Palestinian Arabs would be afforded an opportunity to build their own statehood on their own land.

The Soviet principles for a political settlement are just for Israel, too, because they ensure for that state conditions of peace and security within recognised and secure borders which would be inviolable. Israel would have an opportunity to free itself from the political isolation it has found itself in because of its aggressive policy in the world and would be able to normalise its relations with many foreign countries.

What does the Soviet Union see as the task of the participants in the international conference on the Middle East that it proposes?

From the Soviet Union's point of view, the practical task of the participants in the conference is to reach in the course of its work mutually acceptable accords which together would provide a specific and realistic programme for implementing the relevant UN resolutions on the situation in the Middle East and on the issue of Palestine. These accords must be confirmed by appropriate documents. These must be substantial political documents that are binding on

all the sides. Mutual security which is one of the basic elements of a lasting and just peace can only be ensured on the basis of mutual trust and good-neighbourly cooperation between the states in the region, on the basis of their strict adherence to the treaties and agreements concluded at the conference. The settlement reached at the conference should not give unilateral advantages or privileges to any of the sides. Should the conference take a different course, it would be doomed to failure.

What the participants in the conference bring to it and what they are guided by is also important. Fair solutions, acceptable to all the interested parties, can be reached only if these parties show good will, the willingness to take mutual account of one another's interests, a sense of responsibility and sound judgement, and only if they cast aside time-serving considerations.

The Soviet Union is ready to act at the conference in a way that will promote the necessary accords in every way and help to make a just and lasting peace a reality in the Middle East at last.

Is the problem of Lebanon supposed to be solved jointly with the other questions of a Middle East settlement or prior to the convocation of the international conference?

Well-known UN Security Council resolutions 508 and 509, adopted during the Israeli aggression in Lebanon in June 1982, demand the speediest and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territory of that Arab country so as to ensure its territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty. Any delay in putting these resolutions into effect would actually encourage the aggressor and create conditions favourable to Israel's efforts aimed at establishing its control over a part of the indigenously Lebanese territory. Any attempt, therefore, to tie in the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territory of Lebanon with the reaching of a comprehensive Middle East settlement is not just unacceptable—it is harmful because, as experience has shown, a protracted Israeli occupation of Lebanon is fraught with negative consequences not only for the internal political situation in Lebanon, but also for the situation in the Middle East as a whole.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that the problem of Lebanon—both in its external and internal aspects—would never have arisen if a just and comprehensive settlement had been achieved in the Middle East and, in particular, if the pivotal problem of the Middle East conflict—the Palestine problem—had been solved. It will become possible fully to protect Lebanon from outside interference only when such a settlement is reached whose terms, naturally, will be drafted with the participation of Lebanon, as a state that has a common border with Israel and that has more than once been an object of its aggressive acts. It is precisely for this reason that the Soviet Union considers it essential that Lebanon, being an immediately interested party, should take part in the proposed international conference on the Middle East.

Why should the USSR and the USA be mandatory participants in the proposed international conference on the Middle East?

The Soviet Union's proposals on a Middle East settlement of July 29, 1984, specify that, alongside the Arab countries that have a common border with Israel, Israel itself and the PLO, the USSR and the USA should also participate in the conference. It is pointed out that, owing to the circumstances, these two states have been and are playing a major role in

Middle East affairs. It is also noted that they co-chaired the previous conference on the Middle East, convened in conformity with Resolution 338 of the UN Security Council which had been moved jointly by the USSR and the USA, after the resumption of hostilities in the region in October 1973.

Hardly anybody in the world will deny the fact that these two states—the Soviet Union and the United States—bear a special responsibility for maintaining universal peace and security in the international arena today. Of course, this responsibility—it is by no means a privilege—extends to the Middle East as well. The history of the Middle East conflict is, at the same time, the history of the collision of two approaches to and two policies in matters related to a settlement of this conflict and to the ways of achieving it.

It is no secret that Israel's aggressive expansionist policy with respect to neighbouring Arab countries and the Arab people of Palestine relies totally upon Washington's all-round assistance and support. US-Israeli cooperation which above all in the military-political field has an obvious anti-Arab edge, assumed fundamentally new dimensions after the signing of a memorandum of understanding on "strategic cooperation" between the United States and Israel. In this connection, it is at times difficult to answer the question about which of these strategic allies is more interested in the Arab-Israeli conflict remaining unsettled and which of the two is the initiator of ever more anti-Arab actions. The main point, however, is clear and significant: Israel, acting on its own and without the US support, would have not been able to persist in its obstructionism, ignore the demands of common sense and realism, and the basic norms of international law and the UN Charter,

renounce a truly fair and comprehensive settlement, and press the Arabs to yield by forcing separate deals on them.

There is still another side to the US policy in the Middle East, which cannot but cause concern—namely, the US administration's striving to ensure a US military strategic presence in the region under the guise of "peace-keeping". While making vigorous efforts to further and promote initially a policy of partial solutions and subsequently of separate deals between Israel and the Arabs, the United States took advantage of its involvement in the so-called "peaceful process" to step up its military expansion in the Middle East, specifically, by offering its "good" services for enforcing the separate accords reached in a secretive way. This process began with the seemingly harmless flights of US reconnaissance aircraft over the Suez Canal zone after the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli agreement on the disengagement of troops in January 1974. Later, a US contingent was stationed in the Sinai Peninsula for an indefinite period as part of the multinational forces made up of army units from NATO countries. The militaristic policy of force pursued by the United States was revealed particularly clearly in connection with its direct, armed interference in the internal conflict in Lebanon in the wake of Israel's 1982 aggression.

Considering that all these militaristic actions were undertaken by the United States in the framework of forming its Rapid Deployment Force and the search for bases for it in the Middle East, the question arises whether a durable peace is at all possible in the region if the US administration continues to pursue its policy of turning the Middle East into its private domain.

On the other hand, it is well known that the Arab states subjected to Israeli aggression in June 1967 could withstand the grim trial of military defeat largely thanks to the support given them by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The all-round assistance, including that in the military field, provided by the Soviet state for the Arab states, victims of Israeli aggression, was a major factor of the endurance with which these states resisted Israel's attempts to make them surrender and reconcile themselves to the loss of a sizable part of their original territories. The high level of Soviet-Arab cooperation was demonstrated in the course of the October 1973 war in the Middle East, when the armed forces of Egypt and Syria, modernised with Soviet assistance, carried on operations in Sinai and the Golan Heights as equals of the Israeli army, not infrequently gaining an obvious advantage over it. The Syrian and Egyptian servicemen shattered the myth of the invincibility of the Israeli army and proved the untenability of the theory of permanent military superiority, upon which Israel's doctrine of security has been and continues to be based.

The two great powers were also deeply involved in the political efforts towards working out an international legal basis of a Middle East settlement. In October 1973, a joint Soviet-American initiative made it possible to bring the sides together round the table of the Geneva Peace Conference for the first time in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Of course, there are essential differences in the Soviet Union's and the United States' stands with regard to the fundamental issues involved in a Middle East settlement. Yet this in no way diminishes the indisputable truth that the interest of both of the leading states of the present-day world would be a major factor in the process of restoring peace

and quiet in the region on a just and durable basis.

The Soviet Union has more than once, including its proposals of July 29, 1984, shown such an interest. It is ready for practical, constructive and honest cooperation with all interested parties at the international conference on the Middle East.

What is the role assigned to the United Nations in the proposed conference?

The United Nations is the spokesman for the world community and has made a tremendous contribution to working out an international legal basis for a Middle East settlement. One of its tasks in maintaining universal peace and security, therefore, is to seek the practical implementation of the resolutions on the Middle East problems that it has adopted. Three of them, in our view, are basic. These are Resolution 181 (II) of the UN General Assembly on the partition of Palestine, affirming the equal right of the Palestinian Arabs and Jews to self-determination and the formation of independent states of their own; Resolution 242 of the Security Council of November 22, 1967, providing for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the territories occupied in the course of the 1967 conflict and the right of all states in the region to an independent and secure existence; and Resolution 3236(XXIX) of the UN General Assembly, recognising the inalienable national rights of the Arab people of Palestine to self-determination, national sovereignty, and independence, i.e., the establishment of their own independent state. The achievement of a comprehensive and just settlement can hardly be expected without due consideration of these resolutions.

The Soviet Union proposes that the international conference on the Middle East be held under the auspices of the United Nations. This means, above all, that the sides involved in the conflict will have an

opportunity to make use of the positive experience accumulated by the United Nations in settling controversial issues of long standing through negotiations and the use of political means.

There is still another point to be considered. Holding Arab-Israeli talks has always involved rather difficult procedural and related organisational issues. Bringing them together under the auspices of the UN would facilitate substantially the search for mutually acceptable solutions to these issues. Suffice it to say that both the Arab countries and Israel are members of the UN and take an active part in its work. As for the Palestine Liberation Organisation, it enjoys the status of observer at the UN as the legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine. Acting under this status, it has more than once taken an equal part in sessions of the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, and other international organisations. It is evident that it would be much easier to use this procedure than to try to find other, very dubious ways of including representatives of the Palestinians in the process of peace negotiations.

What is the reason for including Egypt in the proposed conference, considering that it has already signed a peace treaty with Israel?

Experience shows that the signing of the separate peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in March 1979 has not led, nor could it lead, to establishing a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It could not even solve questions relating exclusively to bilateral Egyptian-Israeli relations.

Using the nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a point of departure, it should be stated that this conflict has aspects that cannot be solved on a bilateral basis or in the event of any one of the parties

being excluded. The question of guarantees may be cited by way of example. The international guarantees for creating the conditions for a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in the Middle East can only be reliable and effective if they are acceptable to all interested parties. Since the question of international guarantees is expected to be one of the major items on the agenda of the proposed international conference on the Middle East, the participation of Egypt in such a conference should be regarded as quite natural and essential. The attainment of a comprehensive and just Middle East settlement, with which the separate Egyptian-Israeli treaty has nothing in common, is a concern of all interested parties, Egypt included.

What other states of the Middle East and other regions are to take part in the conference proposed by the USSR?

The Soviet proposals do not specify which other countries of the Middle East and other regions are to take part in the conference. This seems to be quite reasonable, since it would be premature to determine the full list of participants in the conference before its preparation becomes a practical matter. It will probably become possible to proceed with deciding upon such a list after all the directly interested parties give their consent in principle to take part in the conference. It is in that event that not only the list of participants in the conference, but also a number of other issues, including procedural and organisational ones, could be agreed upon through contacts between the directly interested parties.

Is consent to the Soviet Union's proposals of July 29, 1984, an obligatory condition that should be accepted by all interested parties before they start negotiations at the international conference?

It should be noted right away that the Soviet Union has never tried, nor is it trying, to take the questions of a Middle East settlement under its exclusive patronage and to claim the role of being virtually the sole arbiter or side that determines the dimensions of the solution of the problem. It is quite evident that drawing up the conditions for peace in the Middle East and normalising relations between the conflicting sides is, above all, the concern of these sides themselves.

Of course, the Arab states, especially those that have a common border with Israel, are interested in solving Middle East problems. Israel itself and the Palestine Liberation Organisation have a direct bearing on the way to solve these problems. Not the least of the factors in the future development of events in the Middle East region, in influencing the direction of its further progress—whether it will be towards peace or an even worse confrontation—is the position taken by the United States.

It is most desirable that all sides should engage in necessary activity, that is, activity that is aimed in the right direction—towards reaching a comprehensive and just settlement of the Middle East conflict—rather than at creating the appearance or illusion of its solution, for which the initiators of the policy of separate deals are striving.

As for the Soviet Union's proposals of July 29, 1984, they, just as all previous Soviet initiatives on this question, are specifically proposals that summarily reflect the Soviet Union's views on the basic principles and main lines of a Middle East political settlement and of the ways towards reaching it. In putting them forward, the Soviet side clearly was guided by the generally recognised norms of international law and by the provisions of the UN Charter, such as the

inadmissibility of acquiring other peoples' territories by acts or threats of force; the right of peoples to self-determination, independence, and sovereignty; the respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of states, etc. In other words, it was guided by those principles that the UN, in its resolutions on the Middle East and the question of Palestine, has determined as the basis of a comprehensive Middle East settlement. Of course, while defining its stand on the Middle East problems, the Soviet Union could not but consider who or what is the main cause of their remaining unsettled and what the just demands of all sides are, which should be met if a true settlement is to be reached.

In advancing its proposals, the Soviet Union did not intend, nor does it now intend, to impose them on anyone whatsoever. This would totally contradict its foreign policy course. The main thing behind these proposals is the USSR's profound interest in the speediest elimination of the dangerous flash-point of international tension in the Middle East and its striving to make a positive contribution to the establishment of a just and lasting peace in that region. The obvious fact should not be forgotten that the quiet and security of the Soviet Union's southern borders is directly related to the developments in the Middle East.

The Soviet peace initiative on Middle East affairs reflects the Soviet Union's readiness to cooperate constructively and practically with all those throughout the world who are trying in good faith to secure at last peace and quiet in the Middle East, with all those to whom the ideals of justice and freedom are dear.

In the Soviet Union's opinion, its proposals of July 29, 1984, provide a sound basis for all sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict, brought together round the table of the international conference, to work out

mutually acceptable solutions of the fundamental questions of the conflict. The possibility is not to be excluded that some of the sides may express and uphold a viewpoint not fully conforming with or even contrary to what the Soviet proposals envision. This is quite natural considering that the matter at issue is a conflict that has deep and old roots.

The USSR's Attitude to the Policy of Separate Deals in a Middle East Settlement

Why does the Soviet Union advocate collective efforts by all interested parties in a Middle East settlement?

This approach is determined, above all, by the character and nature of the Middle East conflict itself and the interrelation of its various aspects. These exclude the possibility of a final and radical solution without due consideration of the interests and rights of all sides.

Of course, in relations between Israel and an individual Arab state, for example, Jordan, Lebanon or Syria, there may and do exist questions pertaining to the sphere of specific bilateral relations which, apparently, will be solved in the framework of a comprehensive settlement through bilateral contacts or negotiations. Yet it is the problems that demand a solution on a multilateral basis that are of prime significance in the Arab-Israeli conflict, specifically, such problems as the question of Palestine; the questions of eliminating the consequences of Israeli aggression against neighbouring Arab states, above all, that of ending the Israeli occupation; the question of the nature of future relations between Israel and the Arab countries and mutual commitments by the sides; and the question of the need to work out international guarantees.

In addition, it should not be forgotten that the involvement of most of the Arab countries in the conflict with Israel is a result not only of individual decisions that are within the competence of each of them severally, but also of all-Arab decisions adopted in the framework of the League of Arab States which has been giving and continues to give primary attention to the problems of the Middle East conflict in its work. As early as April 1, 1950, the League adopted a resolution stipulating that "no State (Member) of the Arab League may negotiate or actually conclude

a separate peace (treaty) or any (other) political, military, or economic agreement with Israel. A (Member) State which does take any such course shall be considered to have withdrawn from the Arab League forthwith in accordance with Article 18 of its Pact." The resolution of the Arab states' Summit Meeting in Baghdad in November 1978 stressed, for example, that the struggle for the restoration of the Arabs' rights, both in Palestine and in the occupied Arab territories, is a nationwide responsibility and that the basic principle, mandatory for all Arab states, is the principle of the inadmissibility of a separate solution of the Palestine problem or the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole by any one Arab country.

These all-Arab resolutions were applied against Sadat's Egypt in 1979 when it signed the well-known Camp David accords and a separate peace treaty with Israel. At the time economic and political sanctions were applied against Egypt; specifically, the Arab Republic of Egypt was expelled from the League of Arab States.

A major step towards peace in the Middle East was the Twelfth Summit Conference of Arab States in Fez, which adopted the principles of the solution of the Palestine problem and of a Middle East settlement as a whole that met with widespread approval throughout the world. These principles, while conforming with the relevant resolutions of the UN, envision, on the whole, a just future peace in the Middle East that would ensure the right of all states to a free and independent existence and, in general, tally with what the Soviet Union and other peace-loving forces have been championing for many years now. Judging by the Pact of the League of Arab States, the Fez decisions are obligatory for the Arab states that approved them, while the entry of any one

Arab state into separate negotiations with Israel would mean in fact a violation by that Arab state of the LAS Pact and of the Fez decisions. Besides, separate negotiations would create favourable conditions for the Israeli aggressor by enabling it to dictate its will and impose terms to its advantage, compelling the Arab state that is acting alone to make substantial concessions that would affect all-Arab interests or the rights of another Arab state.

The need for collective efforts is also dictated by the need to ensure that the settlement is just. The continuing occupation by Israel of considerable Arab territories provides it with a powerful lever for bringing pressure to bear upon the Arabs, which can be counterbalanced only by the Arabs' solidarity and concerted action. The collective efforts of all interested sides aimed at achieving a comprehensive and just settlement would eliminate the possibility of imposing one's will, blackmail, and threat of force by any side whatsoever, and would ensure an equal and honest partnership. This can be attained in the framework of an international conference specially convened for reaching a settlement, in which all the interested sides would take part on an equal basis.

Why does the USSR oppose the Camp David accords?

In our view, Camp David as a "peace-making process" had two aspects: on the one hand, the accords on the essence of certain problems relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict that were reached in the course of US-Israeli-Egyptian negotiations, and, on the other hand, the procedure and method of conducting negotiations. In terms of both aspects, Camp David has led to an even greater aggravation of the Middle East problems, made the tangle of contradictions existing in the Middle East even more com-

plicated, and badly damaged the interests of a just and comprehensive settlement in the region.

Let us try to make a very brief appraisal of Camp David in terms of the essence of the accords that were reached there. If we narrow down our approach to examine them from the viewpoint of purely Egyptian-Israeli relations, we can see that even here, despite the fuss about the Egyptian-Israeli separate treaty made by Israel and the West, the aggressor has not completely renounced the results of his aggression and even continues to keep hold of Taba, i.e., part of the territory that had been under Egyptian control before the outbreak of the June 1967 aggression. In addition, it is known that Egypt's sovereignty even over that part of the Sinai Peninsula that has been returned is very curtailed. Presently the Israeli servicemen on Egyptian territory have been replaced by the so-called multinational forces, whose backbone is the US contingent.

This seems to concern only the Egyptian side since, it is argued, Egypt is free to dispose of its own territory as it sees fit. Indeed, it would be so if the interests of other directly concerned sides in the conflict—and not only theirs—were not also affected.

First, the continuing occupation of Taba creates a precedent, as it were, in which not all of the Arab territories captured by force of arms are given back to their rightful owners. Considering the Israeli ruling circles' territorial claims to the West Bank of the River Jordan, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights, it becomes quite clear that this precedent is obviously intended to be used in the course of negotiations over these Palestinian and Syrian territories, should such negotiations ever be held. Second, the "changing of the guard" in Sinai was necessary not only to ensure Egypt's break with the all-Arab front of resistance to the Israeli aggressor, but also to provide the United

States and other NATO countries with a springboard for direct interference in the affairs of the states of the Middle East and contiguous areas. In effect, a foothold has been created in Sinai for the interventionist US Rapid Deployment Force, which, as is known, has punitive functions.

In a broader sense, by providing for the solution of the pivotal problem of Palestine through granting a restricted "autonomy" to the residents of the West Bank of the River Jordan and the Gaza Strip, and by completely rejecting the idea of establishing an independent Palestinian state, the Camp David accords in fact sanctioned the perpetuation of the Israeli occupation of these Palestinian territories. Just as had been expected, the illegal practice of establishing Israeli settlements and increasing the number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was stepped up radically after Camp David, and now these territories are being tied ever stronger to the economic structure of Israel. "Greater" Jerusalem, which includes the occupied eastern part of the city, was declared the "eternal and indivisible" capital of the State of Israel. Tel Aviv has in effect annexed an indigenously Syrian territory—the Golan Heights.

No less dangerous is the fact that the Camp David accords gave freedom to the Israeli military with respect to the other Arab states, in particular, Lebanon. It is no accident that the Israeli aggression in Lebanon, which has resulted in bloody tragedy for the Lebanese people and the Palestinians residing in that Arab country that still continues today, is regarded throughout the world as a direct consequence of Camp David.

All this taken together shows the untenability, more exactly, the viciousness of Camp David also as a method of conducting Arab-Israeli talks. The separate deal could not but lead to such results since the

distinctive feature of the policy of "direct negotiations", which today is still imposed by the United States and Israel, is precisely the renunciation of a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East and the striving to make use of such negotiations to compel the Arab side or sides that have accepted this method of conducting negotiations to abandon the all-Arab demands.

There are all kinds of negotiations. Conducting them from a position of strength, i.e., dictating one's terms to others, means distorting the very concept of negotiations. This is exactly what negotiations "Camp David style" make possible. The concept of separate talks is filled with the spirit of self-interest and contempt for the rights of those who do not take part in them. Surely, accords worked out in such an atmosphere cannot but generate fresh conflicts and fresh contradictions. The only sensible alternative to this is the path of honest negotiations which presuppose a comparison of the views and appraisals of all interested parties and the search for mutually acceptable solutions conforming to the principles of equality and equal security of the sides, rather than subordinating the interests of one side to the interests of another.

Proceeding from the above, it can be stated that the efforts towards reviving the Camp David policy are nothing but an attempt to put off the establishment of a truly just and lasting peace in the Middle East, consolidate the results of many years of the aggression of the imperialist forces against Arab countries and peoples, and secure their hegemony and diktat over that region.

Being a loyal and consistent advocate of peoples' struggle for their freedom, independence, and sovereignty, the Soviet Union has stood and will continue to stand against this anti-Arab policy, however

it is disguised. In the context of a multilateral conflict—which is what the Middle East conflict actually is—the procedure of negotiations, including the question of the number of participants, largely predetermines the essence and thrust of the accords worked out in the course of the talks. Justice can be ensured only when all interested sides take part in them.

The USSR believes that the only way to solving the Middle East conflict is through an international conference. The United States and Israel, however, are strongly against this proposal. Therefore, while continuing to call for convening an international conference, the Soviet Union must be aware that its appeals are unrealistic. Thus the USSR seems to be misleading both itself and others by continuing to insist on something that cannot be carried out in practice.

Before proceeding to the question of whether the idea of convening an international conference is realistic or not, it seems to be necessary to examine the reason why, in the Soviet Union's opinion, the international conference is the only correct and practical way to reach a comprehensive and just Middle East settlement.

Of course, if a different kind of settlement were at issue, i.e., a partial or limited solution of the problems relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the age-long experience of world diplomacy would offer—and indeed does offer—quite a few examples of other means and mechanisms for resolving controversial questions. However, since the point under discussion is a comprehensive and just settlement—which is the only way to bringing peace and quiet to the peoples of the Middle East—there is but one way towards reaching it, and that is an international conference.

The entire, nearly 40-year-long history of the conflict in the Middle East, marked by numerous Arab-

Israeli clashes and five full-scale wars, is especially complicated and multifaceted. Its settlement—of course, on a permanent and fair basis—calls for the solution of a great number of extremely intricate and sometimes intertangled problems that affect the interests and rights of many states. Take, for example, the question of the cessation of the state of war and the establishment of peace between Israel and the Arab countries, or the Palestine problem which, in keeping with the unanimously adopted resolutions of the League of Arab States, all Arab countries regard as their own. It is far from accidental that the Arab leaders decided at their meeting in Baghdad to apply political and economic sanctions against Egypt after Sadat signed a separate peace treaty with Israel. Nor is it accidental that the Palestinian leadership right away accused the Egyptian President of selling out the Palestinians and their national rights in exchange for a handful of sand in Sinai by giving his consent at Camp David to a curtailed "administrative autonomy" for the residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Any separate, behind-the-scenes deal is an attempt to take the edge off some problems at the expense and to the detriment of other problems and the interests of other countries. This way cannot lead to a settlement; rather, it makes the tangle of Middle East contradictions even tighter and creates fresh situations of conflict by causing strong differences and dissent among the Arab states.

Thus, the very nature of the Middle East conflict, the close interconnection of various aspects of the Middle East problem, and the fact that the interests of many states in the region are intertwined dictate the need for a solution through the collective efforts of all interested sides, which not infrequently adhere to quite contradictory standpoints. Where else is it possible to search for mutually acceptable solutions

to the divisive issues while taking into account the interests and rights of all the sides if not around a negotiating table and if not at an international conference?

The Soviet Union is fully aware—and is under no illusion—that convening an international conference on the situation that has developed in the Middle East will not be an easy matter by any means. Yet to say that this is unrealistic and unfeasible and to renounce the idea of the conference because of this pretext would be an error, to say the least. For it is only a short step to the conclusion that the struggle against Israeli aggression, for the liberation of occupied Arab lands, and for the realisation of the Palestinian people's national rights is futile, that it had been doomed to failure before it was launched, and that the efforts exerted for many years by the Arab countries and peoples have been in vain. This view, in turn, would lead to a renunciation of struggle and the submission to the aggressor's terms. Besides, the experience of many international forums such as, for example, the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, convincingly shows that collective efforts by interested sides bear fruit if the sides are guided by good will and the desire to achieve positive results, and display a sensible readiness to take account of the interests and rights of others and to find mutually acceptable solutions.

What is actually unrealistic is the expectation that the aggressor and the United States, which is backing it and which does not even want to hear of a comprehensive settlement, will not offer any opposition, will give up the spoils of Israeli aggression, so to say, of their own accord, and will stop trying to impose "settlements" upon the Arabs that would enable the aggressor to strengthen its hold on the indigenously Arab territories captured by force.

The Soviet Union is firmly convinced that, in view of the strongly negative stand taken by Israel and the United States, the convocation of an international conference on the Middle East is possible only through the concerted and persistent efforts of the entire international community and that only purposeful work towards the realisation of this idea can bring success. Surely, particular responsibility for this rests with the Arab states whose principled course, steadfastness and consistency in this matter play the key role. The international conference has only one possible alternative—a policy of separate deals which, as is known from the experience of Camp David, brings more sufferings and miseries to the peoples of the Middle East. The turn that future developments in the Middle East will take depends, above all, on the Arabs.

The United States and Israel support the so-called direct negotiations. Why is the USSR against such negotiations which, according to the United States and Israel, are aimed at settling the conflict?

First, it seems to be necessary to clear up the essence of the "direct negotiations" advocated by the United States and Israel. If one tries to have a better understanding of the real purpose of the US-Israeli demand for this kind of negotiations, it becomes clear that this implies negotiations between Israel and an individual Arab country on a separate, secret basis, rather than direct talks between Israel and the Arabs as equal sides in the Middle East conflict. Direct negotiations according to the US-Israeli formula are nothing more than backstage manoeuvres that inevitably involve the sellout of the interests of a third party, and any understanding that is reached is again to the detriment of a third party. Behind this demand by the United States and Israel is the striving to split the united Arab front of opposition to Israeli

expansionism and imperialist aggression and to compel the Arab states, one at a time, to bow down to the conditions advanced by Israel with a view to consolidating the fruits of its military aggression.

Israel and the United States regard the method of "direct negotiations" as one of the means to ensure the implementation of their far-reaching plans in the Middle East and the strengthening of their positions in that strategically, politically, and economically important region of the world. This can be achieved only by flinging back the Arab national-liberation movement and by slowing down major social and economic changes in the Arab world.

By forcing separate talks on the Arabs, the United States and Israel are seeking to bend the Middle East countries to their military-political will and are trying to turn the Middle East region into the undivided domain of US imperialism and international Zionism.

Whatever form the idea of "direct negotiations" has assumed—and in the years after the October 1973 war we have witnessed how the US administration and Tel Aviv resorted now to the "step-by-step" policy, now to Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy", now to the Camp David policy of separate deals—the US and Israeli policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict has invariably remained essentially the same. It is directed at impeding the attainment of a just and comprehensive Middle East settlement, evading a real solution of its key, pivotal issues, and channelling the settlement along a path that would coincide maximally with the schemes of the Israeli aggressor and its overseas patrons.

By insisting on "direct negotiations" between Israel and the Arabs, the partners in "strategic cooperation", in effect, are aiming to deprive the Arabs of their strength which lies in their unity, their

common stand, and the support of their just cause by all friendly and peace-loving states.

Naturally, while demanding "direct negotiations", neither Israel nor the United States will say a word about the actual goals of their policy. They are concealing their intentions by arguing that the international conference, which the international community is calling to be convened, would allegedly be merely a forum for propagandist rhetoric, rather than a means for holding serious and constructive talks. These arguments, however, are clearly far-fetched and intended for the simple-minded. In addition, the opinion is often voiced, especially in West European circles, that, since the United States and Israel insist on "direct negotiations", the Arabs—if they actually want peace—should agree to them because such negotiations would also lead to accords. The question is, what kind of accords? Are these accords capable of bringing about a just and lasting peace in the Middle East?

Experience shows that accords reached on the basis of talks proposed by the United States and Israel are humiliating and fettering for the Arabs and in no way contribute to a Middle East settlement. Suffice it to recall the Lebanese-Israeli agreement of May 17, 1983, imposed by the joint force of US and Israeli weapons, whose aim was to convert that Arab country into a US-Israeli protectorate, and not at all to give peace and quiet at last to the people of Lebanon. It is precisely for this reason that this agreement met with strong opposition from a broad spectrum of Lebanese political forces, which eventually led to a cancellation of the agreement by the government of Lebanon.

There is yet another opinion that exists among certain Arab figures who entertain illusions about the possibility of the United States displaying a fair and

objective approach to the problems of the Arab-Israeli conflict and departing from its all-out support of Israel's expansionism and aggression. They assert that the Arabs will lose nothing if they agree to "direct" talks and if they try to uphold their cause from a principled stand at these talks. In reality, however, the United States and Israel, while occasionally play-acting about the existence of certain contradictions between them, are in fact pursuing a coordinated policy whose aim is quite obvious—to wrest ever more concessions from the Arabs that would lead eventually to compromise and defeatism. Clearly, it will be much easier for them to achieve this if they succeed in dividing the Arabs and in forcing their terms upon the Arabs one at a time.

The conclusion suggests itself that a just and lasting peace in the Middle East can be reached only by convening a special international conference with the participation of all interested sides, including, of course, the PLO. This opinion is shared by an absolute majority of the members of the international community, and is reflected in the relevant resolutions of the UN.

What is the USSR's attitude to the idea of establishing a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation?

First, about the USSR's stand in principle on the question of the possibility of the future Palestinian state entering into confederative relations. The Soviet proposals stress that after the creation of an independent Palestinian state, it will itself, by virtue of the sovereign rights inherent in every state, determine the nature of its relations with neighbouring countries, including the possibility of forming a confederation. This implies that, as a first step, the Arab people of Palestine must realise, without any outside interference and pressure, their inalienable national rights, above all their right to self-determination and

the establishment of their own independent state. This state could then decide for itself whether and with whom it should or should not enter into confederative relations. In view of this, it seems premature to raise the issue of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. Of course, this does not at all mean that the Soviet Union will be opposed to such a confederation, if two independent states—the Palestinian state and Jordan—agree on it between themselves.

What are the similarities and the differences between the Camp David accords and the Reagan Plan?

On September 1, 1982, US President Ronald Reagan made a speech on the situation in the Middle East. It was widely advertised in the West as the US administration's "new initiative" on a Middle East settlement and came to be called the "Reagan Plan".

In his speech Reagan himself confirmed that the documents signed by Carter, Begin, and Sadat at Camp David remained the foundation of US policy in the Middle East. The Republican President retained the position of the Democratic President on all the key issues of a Middle East settlement.

Neither the Camp David accords nor Reagan's proposals say anything about returning the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem to the Arabs.

Neither the accords nor the proposals recognise the existence of the PLO. Whereas the participants in the Camp David deal silently bypassed the question of a Palestinian state, the Reagan Plan rules out the possibility of creating such a state.

In lieu of the right to self-determination by the Palestinians, the Camp David accords offer a so-called "administrative autonomy", rejected by the Palestinian people.

The Camp David document omits the question of eliminating the Israeli settlements established in the

Arab territories after 1967. By calling for a freeze on the establishment of new Jewish militarised settlements, Reagan, in effect, proposed to preserve the more than 100 settlements already existing on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Both the Camp David accords and Reagan's proposals referred to the United States as the sole "peace-maker" and guarantor of peace.

What was new in the Reagan Plan, as compared with the Camp David accords, was the US President's proposal on the same "administrative autonomy" for the Palestinians on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, but this time in the framework of the Kingdom of Jordan. The acceptance of this proposal by the Arabs would mean depriving the Palestinians of the right to their own independent state; involving Jordan in the Camp David process; and barring the Palestinians themselves, represented by the PLO, from participation in the solution of their vital problems. In accordance with the "new" US initiative, Palestinian autonomy on the West Bank and in Gaza was conditional upon the continued Israeli occupation of the biggest part of these territories and the preservation of Jewish militarised settlements on Palestinian lands. Both the Reagan Plan and the Camp David accords left the destinies of more than three million exiled Palestinians outside the scope of the settlement.

Thus, the Reagan Plan is nothing but a modification of the Camp David accord. A number of its provisions show a toughening of Washington's anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab policy even when compared with the Camp David accords. Reagan's proposals confirmed Washington's policy of expanding the United States' military-political supremacy and of realising its expansionist ambitions in the region.

At the Twelfth Summit Conference of Arab States

in Fez in September 1982, the Arab leaders worked out a joint platform for a Middle East settlement. All eight of its basic principles oppose the Camp David accords and the ensuing Reagan Plan.

What is the USSR's attitude to the agreement on "a framework for common action"[1] signed by King Hussein and Yasser Arafat in Amman on February 11, 1985?

The creation of an independent Palestinian state and the equal participation of the PLO in all phases of a Middle East settlement are among the basic principles underlying the USSR's proposals on a Middle East settlement. The Soviet Union has always supported a collective solution to the complicated tangle of Middle East problems, with the participation of all the sides concerned, and it has opposed any partial and separate solutions modelled on Camp David. The opponents of a just peace in the Middle East regard the Hussein-Arafat agreement as an instrument for reaching precisely this kind of solutions. Relying on the Amman document, they seek to realise a separate Israeli-Jordanian deal that involves Palestinian quislings.

[1] This agreement includes the following five items:

1. Land in exchange for peace in conformity with UN resolutions, including the resolutions of the Security Council.
2. The Palestinian people's right to self-determination: the Palestinians will realise their inalienable right to self-determination, when the Jordanians and the Palestinians can do so in the framework of an Arab confederation that is envisioned to be established between the two states—Jordan and Palestine.
3. The solution of the problem of Palestinian refugees in conformity with UN resolutions.
4. The solution of the Palestine problem in all its aspects.
5. Peace talks will be held on this basis in the framework of an international conference with participation of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and all sides in the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organisation—the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people—as a member of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

In this connection it is very significant that the Amman agreement immediately met with a favourable response from the US administration. The US President said that "it seems as if some progress has been made" for the first time since bringing forward the Reagan Plan for a Middle East settlement in 1982, and stressed that he was optimistic about a Hussein-Arafat agreement. Thus, the head of the White House directly linked the "framework for common action" with his Middle East "initiative", rejected by the Arab world.

It could be seen from the initial response by the United States and Israel to the Amman agreement that Washington and Tel Aviv expected King Hussein and Yasser Arafat to depart from the principled line of opposition to US-Israeli plans in the Middle East. Subsequent developments confirmed that the United States and Israel took advantage of the Hussein-Arafat agreement to press them for ever new basic concessions.

The progressive Arab regimes (in Syria, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Algeria, Libya) and eight of the ten organisations comprising the PLO unambiguously regarded the Amman agreement as a defeatist step in the direction of implementing the Reagan Plan. In addition to condemning the Amman document, all of the Arab national patriotic forces pointed out that it lacked two main principles, upon which the PLO's stand had always been based. These were the equal participation of the PLO in a comprehensive Middle East settlement and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. In the agreement, these provisions are replaced by the participation of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation in the negotiations and the establishment of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation without a clear-cut stipulation of the Palestinian people's right to

statehood. The "land in exchange for peace" principle stated in the first item of the document essentially implied the renunciation of the principle of the Palestine problem as being pivotal to a Middle East settlement.

The Egyptian leadership was among the chief initiators, sponsors, and authors of the Amman agreement. After the signing of the agreement the official Cairo press asserted that the basic provisions of the Amman document allegedly were not in contradiction with the Soviet proposals on a Middle East settlement. These allegations were not grounded in reality and were designed to deceive Arab and world public opinion. Similarly ungrounded in reality were the assertions by the authors and advocates of the Amman agreement that even though the Soviet Union had not stated its support for the "framework for common action", it had not come out against it either.

The Soviet government's stand has more than once been brought to the notice of a number of Arab leaders. Specifically, on May 27, 1985, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR Andrei Gromyko, received in the Kremlin a delegation of the committee of the League of Arab States headed by LAS Secretary-General Chedli Klibi and expressed the conviction that a comprehensive Middle East settlement can be reached only through the collective efforts of all the interested parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The Soviet side emphasised that any kind of separate deals ignoring the just solution of the key Palestine problem would bring a Middle East settlement into a deadlock. On the same day Andrei Gromyko spoke separately with the Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Tahir al-Masri, during which the Soviet side confirmed once again its sharply negative attitude to the attempts of

reaching a Middle East settlement through any kind of separate deals. Addressing the 40th Session of the UN General Assembly, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR Eduard Shevardnadze said: "Some people may think that the Middle East knot can be untied through separate deals. But experience has already shown that such deals can only aggravate the conflict instead of settling it." General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Mikhail Gorbachev pointed out the inadmissibility of separate solutions of the Middle East crisis during his meetings with President François Mitterrand of the French Republic and the leader of Libya Muammar al-Gaddafi.

When speaking about a Middle East settlement, Western leaders, in particular, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain, often mention the "Mubarak initiative". What is it?

On February 24, 1985, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt said to *The New York Times* that he was in favour of the idea of forming a joint delegation of Jordanians and moderate Palestinians—not necessarily PLO representatives—for holding direct talks with Israel. This statement came out of the Amman agreement between King Hussein and Yasser Arafat. Both in spirit and in letter it tallied with the formulations of the Camp David accords, *The Framework of Peace in the Middle East*. Somewhat later, the Egyptian President refuted the reports of some radio stations alleging that he had ruled out the participation of PLO members in the joint delegation. Nevertheless, in September 1985 and during British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's visit to Cairo he again stressed that of prime importance should be the advancement of the peace process, rather than the question of who should represent the Palestinians.

Mubarak proposed three stages of negotiations:

— a dialogue between a joint Jordanian-Palesti-

nian delegation and a delegation of the United States;

— an expanded dialogue with Israel and other sides participating;

— an international conference with the participation of all the interested sides, as well as the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

These proposals by the Egyptian leader, known in the West as the "Mubarak initiative", were interpreted by Israel, the United States and its West European allies as a manifestation of the readiness of the figures standing behind the Amman agreement to make concessions to Washington and Tel Aviv up to and including the renunciation of the key principles underlying the Arab platform.

This "initiative", however, was strongly condemned by the Arab national patriotic forces. They rightfully appraised Mubarak's proposals as a call for separate negotiations between Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation under US-Egyptian patronage and as an attempt to give momentum to the Camp David process, thus proving the "correctness and far-sightedness" of Sadat's policy Should these proposals gain success, they noted, the second phase of Camp David would be put into effect, i.e., the granting of so-called "administrative autonomy" to the Palestinians on the occupied lands of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as a substitute for their legitimate national rights.

Advocates of a real settlement consider the "Mubarak initiative" to be a continuation of the Hussein-Arafat agreement. They point out that there would be no PLO representatives in the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation and that it would include Palestinians acceptable to the United States and Israel. They believe that the "Mubarak initiative" is aimed at compelling the PLO to agree to the renunciation of its independence and consign the rights of

the Palestinian people to oblivion. In their view, the essence of the "initiative" is, at best, to achieve a territorial compromise—the joining of part of the occupied West Bank to Jordan and the annexation of the remaining part by Israel.

During his meetings with US President Ronald Reagan in September 1985, Mubarak repeated his appeal. He called on the head of the White House to give permission to US officials to meet with the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation so that King Hussein of Jordan could open negotiations with Israel. The US administration, however, prefers to continue to bring pressure on the authors and supporters of the Amman agreement so as to make them totally accept the Israeli terms. One of these terms calls for the degeneration of the PLO through its renunciation of the struggle for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Both the Hussein-Arafat "framework for common action" and the "Mubarak initiative" contain a proposal for holding a peace conference on the Middle East. Does it correspond to the Soviet proposal for convening an international conference on a Middle East settlement?

The assertion that there is correspondence between the Soviet proposal for holding an international conference and the proposals put forward in Amman and Cairo is untenable. This way of phrasing the question can be viewed only as an attempt to misrepresent the essence of the international conference on the Middle East and to emasculate the main content of the Soviet proposals.

The conference envisioned by the July 29, 1984 Soviet proposals on a Middle East settlement is fundamentally different from the one mentioned in the Amman document and the proposals put forward by the Egyptian President. They differ above all in their

diametrically opposite approach to the question of establishing an independent Palestinian state and to the PLO's right to be the sole legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine. These two basic principles, without observing which a just peace in the Middle East is impossible to achieve, were in fact ignored both in Amman and in Cairo.

The Soviet proposal for a conference presupposes collective efforts with the participation of all interested parties, including the PLO, at all stages of a Middle East settlement. The "Mubarak initiative" provides for holding an international forum after separate Camp David-style talks.

The attitude of the Arab national patriotic forces to the idea of holding an international conference different from the one mentioned in the Soviet proposals of July 29, 1984, was well expressed by the Aden newspaper *Ar-Rabi Ashar Min Uktubar* (14 October). It wrote that this conference, which is planned to be held after the separate deal or at the same time with it, is assigned the role of a "formal registrar" that will merely rubber-stamp the decisions conforming to the wishes of the United States and Israel and drafted in the framework of that separate deal.

In their statements, the US Secretary of State and other representatives of the US administration now and then express a willingness to revise their negative attitude to the idea of holding an international conference on the Middle East, but only on certain terms. What are they?

The United States takes an active part in all kinds of speculations round the Middle East peace conference. While opposing this conference, just as Israel does, the White House is at the same time aware that the idea of the separate Israeli-Jordanian deal it is nurturing needs some kind of international camou-

flage. In particular, US Secretary of State George P. Shultz, while rejecting the Soviet proposal for a conference, has more than once stressed that the United States intends to search for ways to achieve a striking demonstration of international support for direct talks between Israel and Jordan.

The White House opposes the Soviet proposal, above all because it stipulates that the PLO and the USSR should participate in the international conference.

The United States does not recognise the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and openly calls it a terrorist organisation. It is striving to ensure that those Palestinians who do not represent the Palestinian people and who, therefore, do not aim at creating an independent Palestinian state should take part in separate Jordanian-Israeli talks. At the same time, Washington is ready to agree to the participation of PLO representatives in the negotiations, but on condition that this organisation renounce the goals of its struggle and cancel all resolutions on the question of Palestine previously adopted by itself and at Arab summits.

The United States unceasingly opposes the Soviet Union's participation in a Middle East settlement. At the same time, trying to neutralise the negative response of the Arab world to the Amman agreement and the "Mubarak initiative" and simultaneously to mislead Arab and world public opinion, US officials occasionally begin to speak about a possible change in their attitude both to the conference and to the USSR's participation in it. While doing so, they also speak on behalf of Tel Aviv and propose a number of conditions that are obviously unacceptable. For example, they demand the full restoration of Soviet-Israeli diplomatic relations without Israel having to renounce its aggressive policy of annexation and the

cessation of anti-Semitic propaganda and the infringement of Jewish citizens' rights allegedly taking place in the USSR. Washington also insists that all attempts to hinder the implementation of the Reagan Plan be ended. This is not only an open and impudent interference in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union, but also an undisguised attempt to impose on it the role of a powerless witness while the second phase of the Camp David deal is put into effect. Naturally, this attempt has been rejected resolutely.

The Regional and International Aspects of the Situation in the Middle East

How does the Soviet Union view the impact of the Middle East situation on the state of affairs in the world as a whole?

Beyond any doubt, the Middle East conflict, just as other regional "hot spots", creates a serious threat to world peace and security. The fact that it is still not settled makes the situation fraught with the danger of yet another armed conflict and even a war between Israel and Arab countries. This would entail all of the unpredictable consequences for the cause of world peace. This view is particularly well-founded today, when almost no one doubts that Israel—thanks to Washington's connivance or even, perhaps, encouragement—seeks to become a nuclear power. Any outbreak of warfare in the Middle East—which cannot be ruled out as long as the Middle East conflict remains unsettled—can lead to a level of confrontation where the opposing sides will be ready to resort to the so-called "unconventional" weapons, i.e., nuclear, chemical, bacteriological, and other mass destruction weapons. The military potential of the Middle East countries, built up over several decades, provides good grounds for such an assumption. Suffice it to recall in this connection that in the course of its June 1982 aggression in Lebanon Israel used cluster, pellet, phosphorus and vacuum bombs and shells, which brought death and sufferings to tens of thousands of Lebanese civilians.

Nor is it a secret that the conflict situation in the Middle East is being used to whip up the arms race. The entire region serves as a proving ground for testing the latest US weapons and entire nations become the victims of such tests.

While poisoning the international situation, the Middle East conflict, in turn, is adversely affected by the state of affairs in the world as a whole, which is characterised by growing tension because of the hege-

monistic strivings of US imperialism. The United States' ambitions towards global domination have not bypassed the Middle East, which it has proclaimed a zone of its "vital interests". This is further confirmed by its militaristic preparations in that region, in particular, the setting up of the so-called Central Command (CENTCOM)—the body coordinating and controlling punitive actions by the interventionist Rapid Deployment Force in the vast territory of the Near and Middle East.

In other words, Washington's attitude towards the Middle East is determined by the forces that view this region through the prism of the global interests of US imperialism. Surely, this cannot but affect the Middle East situation because it introduces into it, alongside the existing regional conflicts and contradictions, elements of the global confrontation of the two main socio-political systems of the present-day world. And, vice versa, this confrontation is being deliberately fanned by the imperialist forces, which put obstacles in the way of solving the regional conflicts and undermine the international efforts in that direction.

The Middle East conflict is especially dangerous in view of the presence of huge nuclear arsenals in that region and in the contiguous areas. Considering the statements by the US administration's spokesmen on the possibility of using nuclear weapons for the protection of the United States' "vital interests" in the Middle East, the threat that hangs over the Middle East peoples and states, resulting from the deployment of US nuclear weapons, for example, on the European continent, becomes quite clear. In addition, US naval units, carrying very diverse and extensive nuclear arsenals on board, constantly cruise the waters of the Mediterranean, Red and Arabian seas, all of which are in the Middle East region. US

carrier-based aircraft include quite a few nuclear-capable airplanes, which can all be brought into action at any moment.

In the Soviet Union there is a strong conviction that international detente and a decrease in the global East-West confrontation would undoubtedly have a very serious influence on the situation in the Middle East region. It would create good prerequisites for establishing a just and lasting peace there.

What is the destructive role of the United States in the Middle East?

It is quite clear that without US financial, military and political support the Israeli ruling circles would be unable to act outside the law in the Middle East. Israel's impertinent violation of the basic norms of international law and all its crimes committed on Arab soil are based not so much on its own strength, which is rather limited and dependent, as on the strength of the imperialist support provided by the United States. It is only thanks to that support that a country with a population of three million and with an external debt upwards of 20 billion dollars dares to challenge the entire Arab world, keep up the fire of war in the region, and imperil the cause of world peace by its aggressive actions.

The "memorandum of understanding on Israeli-American strategic cooperation", signed on November 30, 1981, and the agreement on "new strategic relations" concluded on November 30, 1983, legalised the aggressive military-political alliance of the United States and Israel. These documents offered still more proof that Israel is the main military ally of the United States in the Middle East and the chief US bridgehead for establishing its military-political domination in the region, just as the United States guarantees support for Tel Aviv in

building up its military strength and continuing its expansion in the Arab world.

It is under the direct patronage of the United States that Israel seeks to establish its capital in occupied Jerusalem, has annexed Syria's Golan Heights, and unleashed the massacre in Lebanon during which the aggressors killed, wounded and crippled more than 70,000 Lebanese and Palestinian refugees. Tel Aviv still continues to occupy a substantial part of South Lebanon. The bandit raids by Israeli aircraft on the outskirts of Baghdad in 1981 and on the suburbs of Tunis in 1985 were made by pilots trained by Pentagon instructors and flying US-made aircraft. The US administration, in effect, approved of these terrorist acts by Tel Aviv.

Israel's aggressiveness is fed by deliveries of the deadliest US weapons, paid for by the very same US dollars. During Israel's existence it has received over 50 billion dollars from the United States in various forms of assistance. This amount does not include all kinds of clandestine funds thrown to it by Washington. Nearly 22 billion dollars has been given gratis. The military aid received by Israel free of charge between 1948 and 1986 amounts to some 11 billion dollars.

In addition to providing military and economic assistance, Washington renders unqualified support to the Israeli aggressor at the UN and other international organisations. Thus, the US representative at the Security Council used the power of veto 21 times in voting on the questions of a Middle East settlement, the Israeli aggression in Lebanon, and the situation in occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories. Out of the 17 anti-Arab vetoes, 14 were used during Ronald Reagan's presidency. Moreover, the United States is blackmailing the UN, threatening to withdraw from that organisation if it adopts a

resolution on applying sanctions against Israel. The United States persists in challenging the world community and international law by refusing to recognise the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

While blocking at the UN all attempts aimed at restoring international law in the Middle East, the US administration at the same time torpedoes any initiatives on a Middle East settlement that arise on the basis of collective efforts by all interested sides. Together with Israel it is trying to impose a peace, American style, on the Arabs by means of separate deals.

What is the essence of "strategic cooperation" between the United States and Israel?

On November 30, 1981, a "memorandum of understanding on Israeli-American strategic cooperation" was signed in Washington. It legalised the aggressive military-political alliance of the United States and Israel. The US-Israeli memorandum on "strategic cooperation", just as the entire escalation of the US military presence in the region, was an outcome of the Camp David deal, which led to the expansion of imperialist interference in the affairs of the Arab peoples. The document signed in Washington legally affirmed Israel's commitment to render assistance to the United States in expanding its military presence in the Middle East. At the same time, the signature of the US Secretary on the military agreement with Israel made the United States a direct accessory to Israel's acts of aggression and crimes against the Arab states.

The memorandum stated opposition to the "threat to peace and security" in the Middle East, allegedly caused by the Soviet Union, as the main objective of "strategic cooperation". The Arabs, however, realising that the agreement was a dangerous step towards

assembling a broad anti-Soviet front consisting of various states and forces throughout the world on the initiative of the US administration, were also aware that the conclusion of what is virtually a military pact between the United States and Israel was aimed directly against the Arab states. Most of the Arab leaders and much of the Arab mass media consider the military agreement between Washington and Tel Aviv as a "declaration of war on the Arab peoples".

The correctness of that appraisal was soon confirmed by Israel's annexation of Syria's Golan Heights and, subsequently, by the barbarous, murderous invasion of Lebanon by the Israeli aggressor in June 1982. It is well known that this aggression was fully backed by Israel's "strategic ally" in military, political and diplomatic ways.

During the visit of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Israel to Washington in late November and early December of 1983, relations between the United States and Israel reached heights that were unprecedented in the entire history of their existence. An agreement on "new strategic relations" between the two countries was signed. In keeping with that agreement, the sides set about forming a joint US-Israeli political-military committee. Its functions include joint military planning, carrying out joint military exercises, the deployment of US weapons in Israel, and the exchange of intelligence information. In practice, the political-military committee is assigned the role of being a coordinating centre for the control of joint aggressive operations in the Middle East.

The agreement on "new strategic relations" in effect put Israel on a par with NATO members and granted it special privileges in its relations with the Pentagon. "The package of military aid and trade concessions for Israel," stressed *Time* magazine, "was so extensive that at a State Department dinner for the

Prime Minister, a few guests even joked about raising the Star of David flag over the White House to signal the 'Israeli victory'." As a matter of fact, Israel was given an award in Washington for its aggressive policy, for the crimes it had committed on Lebanese soil, and for the massacre of civilians in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila.

The agreement signed in Washington, just as previous agreements between the two countries, was not confined to articles on military cooperation. In the course of their talks, Reagan and Shamir expressed their intention to follow a common political line in the Middle East. They agreed to continue the Camp David process, strive to perpetuate Israel's rule over the territories it had captured, and impose the so-called administrative autonomy on the Palestinians. The developments in the Middle East show that the strategic partners remain true to their anti-Arab policy.

Is there any difference between the Israeli political blocs Likud and Ma'arah in their approach to the Middle East settlement?

Western and Zionist propaganda tries to make out that the two main Israeli political blocs, Likud and Ma'arah, take different stands on a number of key issues. Thus, Shimon Peres, leader of the Labour Party and the Ma'arah bloc, is usually portrayed as a "dove", standing in opposition to the "hawk" Menachem Begin, leader of Likud, and to Yitzhak Shamir, who subsequently replaced him in that post.

In actual reality, however, there is no essential difference between Likud, a coalition of the Israeli big bourgeoisie, and Ma'arah, claiming to represent the interests of the working people, either in foreign policy issues or in the economic or social field. Both blocs are guided by Zionist ideology and take a chauvinist and racist stand with respect to the

Palestinians and other Arabs. Both Likud and Ma'arah are sworn enemies of the national-liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Anti-communism and anti-Sovietism are equally inherent in both blocs.

It would be appropriate to recall that it was Ma'arah that unleashed four wars against the Arabs. In 1980, Peres, who at the time headed the opposition Labour Party, showed his steel claws by giving total support to the "basic law" advanced by Begin, which proclaimed Jerusalem "the eternal and indivisible capital of Israel". In 1981, Begin ordered the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor in the outskirts of Baghdad. In 1985, Peres gave his blessing to the bandit raid by the Israeli air force on the suburbs of Tunis.

The parliamentary election in the middle of 1984 resulted in the formation of a so-called national unity government by the two blocs. Peres, who headed it, continued and even toughened in certain respects the anti-Arab, anti-Palestinian policy of Likud, which had been ruling the country between 1977 and 1984. His government pursues a policy of genocide towards the Palestinians who live in the occupied territories, and stages pogroms in South Lebanon, which are not unlike the brutalities of the US aggressors in Vietnam and the crimes of the Nazis during the Second World War.

Ma'arah, just as Likud, in every way impedes the attainment of a just and comprehensive Middle East settlement. Peres, just as Begin and Shamir, is striving to impose defeatist deals on the Arabs that are modelled on the Camp David scenario.

The unanimity of the two political blocs on the problems of a peaceful settlement in the Middle East is clearly manifested in the foreign policy platform of the "national" unity government. The epitome of

that platform is the word "no". "No" to the withdrawal of the Israeli occupiers from Palestinian lands—the West Bank of the River Jordan and the Gaza Strip—and from Syria's Golan Heights. "No" to renouncing the annexation of East Jerusalem. "No" to the creation of an independent Palestinian state on its own land. "No" to the recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organisation as the sole legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine. "No" to convening an international conference on the Middle East with the participation of all interested sides. "No" to the participation of the Soviet Union in the solution of the Middle East crisis. "No" to the complete withdrawal of Israel from Lebanese land. And only one "yes"—to Israel's anti-Arab "strategic cooperation" with the United States.

What is the role of the member countries of the European Economic Community in a Middle East settlement?

While both West European countries and the United States are interested in preserving the conditions in the Middle East that are advantageous to the capitalist world at large, their interests do not entirely coincide, if only because Western Europe is much more dependent on deliveries of Arab oil than the United States. Nevertheless, contradictions between the Old and the New World on Middle East questions, just as on many others, do not go beyond the recognition by West European countries of Washington's leading role. The policy of major West European countries in the region is on the whole conducive to the implementation of US and Israeli schemes, even though criticisms of Tel Aviv's annexationist policy have been voiced in the West of late.

The West European stand on a Middle East settlement is based on a special statement on the Middle East by the heads of state and government of the

EEC, issued in June 1980 and known as the Venetian Declaration, as well as on the working document drafted at the meeting of foreign ministers of the EEC member countries in Brussels in December 1980. The provisions included in these documents have been affirmed more than once at subsequent EEC summits.

The Venetian Declaration, worked out under the apparent influence of the Camp David accords, was aimed at drawing other Arab countries, in addition to Egypt, into its implementation. While advocating the Palestinians' right to self-determination and condemning the practice of establishing Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, the declaration at the same time ignored the key issues of a Middle East settlement. These include the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem; the creation of a Palestinian state; and the recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and one of the principal and equal participants in any effort to settle the Middle East crisis. The Venetian Declaration, just like the Camp David accords, had no reference whatsoever to the participation of the Soviet Union in the process of achieving a Middle East settlement.

The Venetian Declaration confirmed once more the futility of the illusory hopes in certain Arab circles that capitalist Western Europe might act counter to the strategic interests of the United States and Israel. On the whole it was an attempt to help the Camp David accords break out of isolation and deadlock.

The attitude of West European countries to the Reagan Plan, advanced in September 1982, which was deservedly called "Camp David in a new wrapping" by journalists, is also quite typical. Western

leaders and the official Western press widely advertised it as a "new" initiative by the United States on a Middle East settlement and vigorously supported Reagan's idea of creating a Jordanian-Palestinian "association".

The West European allies of the United States, following in the wake of the US Middle East policy, reject the well-known Soviet proposals of July 29, 1984, on the Middle East, and renounce the solution of the problems in the region through collective efforts and the participation of all interested sides, including the Soviet Union and the PLO. Repudiating in effect the Soviet idea of holding an international conference on the Middle East, they, just as the United States and Israel, continue to advocate new separate deals modelled on Camp David. Following in the wake of Washington and Tel Aviv, they are trying to use the February 11, 1985 Amman agreement between King Hussein and Yasser Arafat to this end. At the April 1985 session in Luxembourg of the EEC Council of Ministers, held on the level of foreign ministers, representatives of the ten EEC member countries stated their positive attitude both to the Amman agreement and to the "Mubarak initiative".

Leaders of the major EEC countries made personal efforts towards implementing the Amman agreement and the "Mubarak initiative" by trying to organise separate talks between Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, in which the PLO would not be represented. They advocate the readmission of Egypt to the League of Arab States without the renunciation by Cairo of the Camp David accords, and the support of the Hussein-Arafat agreement by all Arab countries.

Does the stand taken by the non-aligned countries on a Middle East settlement correspond to the Soviet stand on this issue?

The Political Declaration adopted by the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in New Delhi in March 1983, set forth the basic principles for a Middle East settlement in the special section *Situation in the Middle East*. All of them correspond, in the main, to the principles of the settlement expressed in the July 29, 1984 Soviet proposals on the Middle East.

Thus, the Declaration confirms that a just peace in the Middle East can only be based on the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab lands and on the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to the establishment of their own independent and sovereign state on their national territory on the basis of Resolution 3236 of the UN General Assembly of November 22, 1974.

Just like the Soviet proposals, the Declaration stresses that the Palestine problem is the key problem in the Arab-Israeli conflict and that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people; that it alone has the full right to represent this people and to participate fully "in all international conferences, activities and events relating to the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict". Just like the Soviet programme for peace in the Middle East, the Declaration includes the demand that the Israeli militarised settlements be eliminated. It says that the existing settlements should be dismantled and that new ones should not be built.

Both the non-aligned countries and the USSR have an identical approach to the all-Arab platform of a Middle East settlement worked out at the Twelfth Arab Summit Conference in Fez. The participants in the New Delhi Conference emphasised that the Fez Plan "constitutes a framework for establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East".

The summit forum of the non-aligned movement condemned the all-round support by the United States of the Israeli aggressor. In particular, the New Delhi Conference expressed its profound concern at the establishment of "strategic alliance" between the United States and Israel, which encourages Tel Aviv to pursue its "policy of annexation, aggression and racial discrimination".

As early as at their Sixth Conference in Havana in 1979, the heads of state or government of 89 out of 95 non-aligned countries resolutely condemned the defeatist policy of Egypt's President Sadat and the Camp David deal. The chairman of the conference, Fidel Castro, called the peace à la Camp David imposed on the Middle East "an armed, dirty, unjust, bloody peace". Like the Soviet Union, the non-aligned countries stand for a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Their leaders spoke up against any partial solutions in the Political Declaration of the Non-Aligned Movement adopted in New Delhi.

At the 38th, 39th, and 40th sessions of the UN General Assembly, an overwhelming majority of the non-aligned countries voted in favour of the resolution that called for a convocation of an international conference on the Middle East with the participation of all interested sides, including the PLO. The non-aligned movement has recognised the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of Arab people of Palestine since the conference of the heads of non-aligned states held in Algiers in September 1973.

What is the Warsaw Treaty countries' stand on a Middle East settlement?

The Warsaw Treaty countries have always stood for a just and comprehensive Middle East settlement. Their common stand invariably has been to support

the just cause of the Arab anti-imperialist struggle and condemnation of Israel's aggressive policy.

Thus, the meeting in Moscow on June 9, 1967, of leaders of Communist and Workers' Parties and heads of government of the Warsaw Treaty member states—Bulgaria, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, the USSR, and Czechoslovakia—and also of Yugoslavia, was of great importance for curbing the Israeli aggression against the UAR, Syria, and Jordan. The participants in the Moscow meeting stressed in their statement that they fully supported the peoples of the Arab East in their just struggle and that they would render them assistance in repulsing aggression and in defending the national independence and territorial integrity of their states. On June 10 the USSR broke diplomatic relations with Israel. On the same day, the other Warsaw Treaty member countries that had participated in the Moscow meeting also severed diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv.

Early in July 1967, the second meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties, with the same participants as in Moscow, was held in Budapest. The meeting helped to increase not only political, but also military and economic support for the Arab countries by the socialist states. The Moscow and Budapest meetings confirmed the readiness of the Warsaw Treaty countries to give their all-round assistance to the Arab peoples, victims of Israeli aggression. The support rendered them by the world socialist system prevented Israel from expanding the scope of its aggression and contributed to the speediest possible restoration of the economic and military potential of the Arab countries. This enabled them to work more successfully towards the elimination of the consequences of the Israeli aggression.

The Warsaw Treaty countries' stand with regard to the situation in the Middle East has been expressed

more than once in a more condensed form at meetings of the Political Consultative Committee, at which all the Warsaw Treaty member states are represented on the summit level. Thus, for example, at the 16th meeting of the Political Consultative Committee, the leaders of Bulgaria, Hungary, the GDR, Poland, the USSR, and Czechoslovakia resolutely condemned the policy of separate Egyptian-Israeli deals under the aegis of the United States. The leaders of the Communist and Workers' Parties and the heads of government of the fraternal states stated their support for the results of the Arab Summit Meeting in Baghdad, which had worked out a complex of measures to counteract Camp David.

In their joint statement, adopted at the last meeting of the Political Consultative Committee, held in Sofia in October 1985, the Warsaw Treaty member states expressed their firm conviction that a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in the Middle East can be achieved only through the collective efforts of all interested parties on the basis of a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Arab lands occupied since 1967; implementation of the lawful rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent state; and the ensuring of the right of all states in the region to an independent existence and development. A practical way to achieve this, the statement pointed out, was by convening an international conference on the Middle East under UN auspices with the participation of all interested sides, including the PLO.

The meeting of the Political Consultative Committee stressed that the interests of consolidating peace in that part of the world could be met by settling Lebanon's internal problems on the basis of a national concord between the Lebanese themselves

and of the continued sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

The participants in the Sofia summit meeting of the Warsaw Treaty countries noted that a settlement of the problems in the Middle East could be promoted by a stronger unity between the Arab countries and the Palestinian movement.

It is asserted that the Soviet-Syrian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation is directed mainly at ensuring peace and security in the Middle East region. What is its practical impact on the situation there?

The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the USSR and Syria was signed in Moscow on October 8, 1980. Precisely at that time, the participants in the Camp David deal were making persistent attempts to impose its terms on the Arab countries. Syria, which is in the vanguard of the struggle against the schemings of US imperialism and Zionism in the Middle East and against the defeatist plans for a Middle East settlement being imposed on the Arabs, was subjected to the strongest pressure and blackmail.

That is why the treaty contributed not only to strengthening Syria's anti-imperialist positions, but also to a further consolidation of the entire National Front for Steadfastness and Confrontation, which, together with Syria, also included Algeria, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Libya, and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The conclusion of the Soviet-Syrian treaty tallied with the vital interests of all the Arab peoples. In a situation where US imperialism, relying on Israel and the Sadat regime, began an all-out attack on the Arab national-liberation movement, friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union became of vital importance to the entire Arab world.

The preamble to the treaty stressed that the USSR

and Syria were determined to oppose decisively the policy of aggression pursued by imperialism and its accomplices, and to continue the struggle against colonialism, neocolonialism, and racism in all of their many forms and manifestations, including Zionism. Expressing the sentiments of broad segments of the Arab masses, the Lebanese newspaper *An-Nida* wrote that the treaty was a hand of friendship magnanimously extended by the Soviet Union to the Arabs and that it was a guarantee of assistance and support in their struggle for the honour of the Arab nation and the security of the Arab land and its wealth.

During the signing ceremony of the document in the Kremlin it was particularly stressed that the Soviet-Syrian treaty was called upon to serve the interests of improving the situation in the Middle East and establishing a true and just peace there. This treaty is diametrically opposite to the Camp David deal and US-Israeli "strategic cooperation". The main objective of the Camp David accords is the military penetration into the Middle East by the United States and the deprivation of the Palestinian people of the right to their own state. The Moscow treaty does not contain a single threat to other peoples, nor the smallest hint at striving to infringe upon their interests. On the contrary, it serves the cause of a just Middle East settlement and the restoration of the lawful rights of the Palestinian people, the cause of peace and security for all peoples in the region. It was a serious warning to the participants in the anti-Arab Camp David deal and an obstacle to the plans of Israel and its backer, the United States, in unleashing a massive military aggression against Syria.

The Soviet-Syrian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation provides a reliable basis for the development of multifaceted relations between the two

countries. It has already borne good results more than once. As Hafiz al-Assad and other Syrian leaders have noted repeatedly, Syria has succeeded in expanding its national economic potential, substantially increasing its defence capability, and lending effective assistance to its Arab brothers in the struggle against imperialism and Zionism thanks to the fulfilment of the provisions of the treaty.

Relying on the support of the Soviet Union, Syria played a major role in terminating the fettering Lebanese-Israeli agreement of May 17, 1983, which had been forced on the government of Lebanon, and in expelling the so-called multinational force, made up of troops from the United States and other NATO countries, from Lebanese soil. Now it continues to help the Lebanese patriots in their heroic struggle for the complete and final expulsion of the Israeli aggressor from Lebanon.

What are the negative effects on a Middle East settlement of contradictions inside the Palestine Resistance Movement and what is the Soviet Union's attitude to these contradictions?

After the withdrawal of the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and its military detachments from Beirut in 1982, the situation inside the Palestine Resistance Movement (PRM) started to become ever more complicated. Sharp contradictions over tactics and strategies in such circumstances arose in the PLO, particularly, in its major component, the Fatah. A group of army officers and activists disputed Yasser Arafat's methods of directing the organisation. A process of the delimitation of forces started in the Palestinian movement which resulted in the emergence of two centres in the PRM. One of them, headed by Arafat, who had retained a majority of the Fatah membership among his supporters, relocated in Tunis. Eight of

the ten major organisations of the PRM stationed their headquarters in Damascus.

The delimitation of forces inside the PRM very adversely affected the prospects for a just and comprehensive settlement. It made possible the conclusion of the Amman agreement between King Hussein and Yasser Arafat. In the opinion of not only the Palestinian organisations whose headquarters are in Damascus, but even of a part of the Fatah, which supports Arafat, this agreement can be used in a way that would implement the bankrupt Reagan Plan by the Arabs themselves. Together with all of the Arab anti-imperialist forces, the Palestinian organisations and circles that are in opposition to Arafat renounced the Amman agreement, viewing it as a manifestation of conciliatory and defeatist tendencies in the Palestinian leadership and as a serious threat to a just solution of the key question of a Middle East settlement.

The strife inside the PRM led to a gradual weakening and narrowing of ties between the Palestinian leaders in Tunis and the anti-imperialist Arab states, national-patriotic and progressive movements, organisations and parties that are waging an irreconcilable and consistent struggle for the elimination of the effects of Israeli aggressions and for the rehabilitation of justice for the Palestinian people. Moreover, the Palestinian leaders in Tunis began to draw ever more closer to those Arab countries and forces that are inclined to accept US and Israeli terms for a settlement in the Middle East.

Naturally, the situation that has developed inside the PLO and the PRM suits Washington and Tel Aviv, which have sharply stepped up their activities aimed at imposing new separate deals on the Arabs modelled on the Camp David accords. In so doing, they are seeking to take advantage of both the

centrifugal processes inside the PRM itself and the breakdown of coordination between the activities of Arafat and his followers and those of the Arab national-liberation movement.

It is quite understandable that the Soviet Union—a faithful friend of the Palestinian people and a staunch advocate of the equal participation of the PLO in a Middle East settlement—is concerned and troubled about the state of affairs inside the PRM. There is a feeling in the Soviet Union that the internal contradictions in Palestine are undermining the PLO's positions, gained in the course of a long and bitter struggle, in the Arab and international arena, and are playing into the hands of the imperialists and Zionists, who seek to bury the Palestine problem, to split the Arabs, and to make them capitulate to the aggressor. The interests of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples demand that the PLO should remain an active anti-imperialist force in the region and a reliable component part of the all-Arab patriotic struggle for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The stronger the inner cohesion of all the detachments of the PRM and the more stable its cooperation with the national-patriotic forces in the Arab world, above all with Syria, which resolutely opposes the schemes of the Israeli aggressors, the greater the prestige of the PLO in that struggle will be.

The Soviet Union believes that any contradictions in the ranks of the Palestinians can and must be overcome by political means. That is why it shares the opinion of those Palestinian organisations which feel that the unity of the PLO can be restored on the basis of the decisions reached at the 16th Session of the Palestine National Council held in Algiers in 1983 with the participation of all the detachments of the PRM, and of the resolutions of the Twelfth Arab Summit Conference in Fez. The 1984 Algiers-Aden

accords on the internal Palestinian settlement between the Fatah Central Committee and the "democratic bloc" could provide the organisational basis for the restoration of unity.

The Soviet Union exposes the activities of imperialism, Zionism, and reactionary forces aimed at splitting the Palestinian ranks. It is doing everything in its power to restore as quickly as possible the unity of the PLO on a patriotic, anti-imperialist, and anti-Zionist basis, which would be opposed to the Camp David accords, the Reagan Plan, and the ensuing new versions of separate deals. The attainment of this goal is in keeping with the vital interests of the Arabs' struggle for restoring justice in the Middle East.

What is the Soviet Union's attitude to the Lebanese problem?

The Soviet Union firmly and consistently stands for the restoration of the sovereignty of Lebanon, for ensuring the independence and territorial integrity of that country, and for reaching an internal settlement in Lebanon by achieving a national concord. This requires, above all, the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon in conformity with UN Security Council resolutions 508 and 509.

So far Israel, although it has been compelled to withdraw its troops from certain parts of Lebanon, has retained actual military control over a substantial part of the South Lebanese territory under the pretext of ensuring a "security zone". In that region, the occupiers stage mass reprisals against the residents of towns and villages and the Palestinian refugees, carry out round-ups, make arrests, and insult the national and religious feelings of the Lebanese. They are assisted in committing outrages and unlawful acts by the puppet "South Lebanon Army", formed of mercenaries and maintained by Israel. Yet it is clear that

an Israeli presence in any form in the south of Lebanon is inadmissible and unlawful, all the more so since it is Israeli interference, provoking communal and religious strife, that has been and continues to be the main cause of the internal conflict in Lebanon. That is why the Soviet Union resolutely condemns the continuing Israeli aggression in Lebanon and expresses its solidarity with the patriotic struggle of the Lebanese people for their legitimate rights and against the Israeli occupation.

The Soviet Union positively views the dialogue that has started between various religious and public groups and Lebanon's political parties, since this is the only correct method to achieve a settlement of the internal problems in Lebanon.

At the same time, it should be borne in mind that the solution of questions relating to the situation in Lebanon is impossible without taking due account of the national interests of the Arab countries, in particular, the interests of ensuring their security in the face of Israeli and imperialist aggression.

What is the Soviet Union's stand on the Iran-Iraq war?

From the very beginning the Soviet Union labelled the Iran-Iraq war as wanton and fratricidal. For more than five years now it has been taking tens of thousands of human lives and destroying the material and cultural values of Iran and Iraq, which had been created by the centuries-long labour of their peoples. The Soviet Union has consistently stood and continues to stand for the speediest cessation of hostilities between Iran and Iraq and for the settlement of divisive issues through negotiations. It regards a political settlement as the only acceptable way of bringing the situation back to normal. The Soviet government reaffirmed this principled stand during the visit of a delegation of the League of Arab States,

headed by its Secretary-General Chedli Klibi, to Moscow in 1985.

At the same time, the Soviet Union has advocated and continues to advocate non-interference in the Iran-Iraq conflict. It is not trying to derive any benefit or advantage from it. US imperialism is quite another matter. At first it contributed to aggravating the conflict and since then it has been constantly trying to make a profit out of it. Washington started preparations for the military colonisation of the Persian Gulf before the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war by concentrating large naval forces there in 1978-1979 during the anti-Shah revolution in Iran. The United States has taken advantage of the war between Iran and Iraq to expand further its military presence in the Persian Gulf area and in the Indian Ocean. Under the false pretext of ensuring "freedom of navigation", the Pentagon has concentrated an armada of dozens of warships, including aircraft carriers in the area. Washington is also drawing its NATO allies into its military adventures in the region.

Taking advantage of the tense situation surrounding the Iran-Iraq conflict, the US administration is trying to put the screws on the leaders of the Arab countries in the Arabian Peninsula, pressing them for permission to use their territories, airspace, and seaports for the military-strategic purposes of the United States. Although Washington styles itself as a "defender" of the interests of the Arab oil-producing countries, it is in fact planning to turn their territories into a military bridgehead which could be used against the Soviet Union if need be.

The White House is interested in the continuation of the Iran-Iraq conflict in order to realise its plans not only in the Persian Gulf area, but also in the Middle East as a whole. The United States believes that the conflict will drain the blood of the countries

in that region, deprive them of the possibility of waging an active struggle against Israeli aggression, and enable the United States to expand its military presence in the area from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean. Washington and Tel Aviv are taking into account the fact that the war between Iran and Iraq undermines the anti-imperialist unity of the Arab countries and creates favourable conditions for pushing through the Camp David accords, the Reagan Plan, and other anti-Arab plans for a Middle East settlement.

The Soviet Union is striving to contribute to establishing a just peace between Iran and Iraq as quickly as possible and creating conditions for rehabilitating their economies and ensuring their further independent and equal development. The USSR is doing everything in its power to facilitate a settlement of the conflict. In particular, it supports the mediatory efforts made by the United Nations, the non-aligned movement, and other international organisations. This stand has more than once been brought to the notice of the warring countries.

The Soviet Union is convinced that conflicts and disunity serve the interests of the enemies of the peoples of the Middle East. And these peoples, now as never before, need to concentrate their efforts and resources on the main direction of the struggle—that against US hegemonism and Israeli expansionism.

The USSR takes into account the interests of not only the Iranian and Iraqi peoples, but also the interests of all the other peoples living on the shore of the Persian Gulf. In contrast to the United States, which is nurturing plans for securing military domination in the region, the Soviet Union has a concrete programme for ensuring the security of the Persian Gulf and of the sea routes that link the states in the region with other countries of the world.

What is the essence of the Soviet proposals on ensuring the security of the Persian Gulf?

The creation of conditions for reaching a just Middle East settlement and ensuring peace and security in the Middle East is linked inseparably with the improvement of the situation in the Persian Gulf area and on the approaches to it. A stable situation in that area and on the sea routes passing through it coincides with the interests of many states on different continents. The Soviet Union is particularly interested in the security of this area, which is geographically close to its southern borders.

In view of this, the Soviet Union advanced an initiative to ease the tension created in the gulf area by the United States which had decided to entrench itself in the region under the false pretext that there exists a "Soviet threat" to the oil riches of the Middle East or the oil transportation routes. The 26th CPSU Congress confirmed the Soviet proposals on the security of the Persian Gulf brought forward in December 1980. Their basic point is to conclude a broad international agreement on the following mutual commitments:

— not to establish foreign military bases in the Persian Gulf area and on adjacent islands; not to deploy nuclear weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction there;

— not to use or threaten to use force against the countries of the Persian Gulf area, not to interfere in their internal affairs;

— to respect the status of non-alignment chosen by the Persian Gulf states, not to draw them into military groupings in which nuclear powers are participating;

— to respect the sovereign right of the states of the region to their national resources;

— not to put any obstacles or threats to normal trade exchange and the use of sea lanes that link the states of that region with other countries of the world.

Reactionary Western propaganda has been pushing onto the pages of the world press the slanderous thesis that the Soviet proposals on the Persian Gulf are a cover to conceal the USSR's striving to divide the area between itself and the United States. On the contrary, the essence of the Soviet proposals is to ensure that the countries of the region, in particular, should take a most active part in the constructive discussion of issues relating to the security of the Persian Gulf area. They have the right to both the first and the last say about the way to ensure their security.

The Soviet Union has never intended to open any kind of an exclusively Soviet-American dialogue about the destiny of the Persian Gulf area. The Soviet Union has exposed the mendacious assertions of certain sources in the West to the effect that Moscow allegedly purposes to partition that area with Washington into spheres of influence. The USSR has advocated and continues to advocate a constructive discussion of the problem at a joint conference or in any other form acceptable to the states of the region. The Soviet side proceeds from a recognition that the USSR and the United States need to be participants in the international talks on the problem of the security of the Persian Gulf, since the non-participation of either of these two states may prevent any decisions adopted in the discussion from being binding.

The Soviet proposals on the security of the Persian Gulf have remained realistic to this day, for the flames of war are still raging there. This is playing into the hands of the United States which is striving

to turn the gulf into a US inland sea under the pretext of ensuring the security of the oil transportation routes. In this connection, the Soviet Union has more than once pointed out the inadmissibility of making use by the imperialist forces of the situation generated by the Iran-Iraq conflict to suit their own ends. It has repeatedly expressed its solidarity with the countries of the Persian Gulf area concerning their inalienable right to use their own natural resources and ensure their own security freely and without any outside interference. These are legitimate rights of all sovereign states, and no one is permitted to violate them and proclaim the Persian Gulf a zone of one's "vital interests", the way the United States did.

Does the Soviet Union intend to restore diplomatic relations with Israel?

For some time past, the Western propaganda and information agencies of certain Arab countries have been widely spreading rumours that the USSR allegedly intends to resume relations with Israel on a governmental level.

As is known, the Soviet Union broke diplomatic relations with Israel on June 10, 1967, five days after the beginning of the aggression against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. This action was taken jointly with a number of the fraternal socialist countries as a sign of protest and condemnation of the Israeli aggression. Since then there has been nothing, either in word or in deed, on the part of the Israeli ruling circles to signify their intention to renounce the policy of aggression and expansion. The whole world is a witness to the fact that Israel continues to pursue a policy of gangsterism and racism towards not only the neighbouring Arab countries, but also towards those that have no common borders with it, and is following a policy of genocide with respect to the

Palestinian and Lebanese peoples. Tel Aviv ignores all UN resolutions on the elimination of the effects of its aggressions against Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon, as well as on the rehabilitation of the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including their right to the establishment of their own independent state.

The continuing Israeli occupation of Arab territories, the violation by Tel Aviv of the inalienable national rights of the Arab people of Palestine, the unceasing aggression against sovereign Lebanon, and the outlaw raids on Iraq and Tunisia show that the Israeli leadership has no intention of adhering to international law and respecting the will of the world community. That is why the Soviet Union has more than once stressed and stresses now that Tel Aviv's continued pursuit of its present policy, which is destroying a just and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East crisis, makes it impossible to maintain normal Soviet-Israeli intergovernmental relations.

The main sources of the rumours about the allegedly expected normalisation of Israeli-Soviet relations are Israel's ruling circles, propaganda and secret services. The goals of this propaganda campaign are quite clear.

First, its organisers are trying to mislead and demoralise the Arabs, undermine their will to resist the US-Israeli schemes in the region, and induce them to pursue conciliatory and defeatist policies by misrepresenting the actual stand of the USSR. The intention is clear. They imply in this way that, since the Soviet Union seeks a rapprochement with Israel, it is God's will that the Arabs should show "flexibility and compliance". In other words, they should agree to forget about the vital interests of the Palestinian people and capitulate to Israel.

Second, the Israeli leaders, whose policy has brought about the international isolation of that state, are also trying to deceive their own people by trying to convince them that the attitude to Israel is beginning to improve throughout the world.

Third, while spreading such insinuations, Israel and the propaganda agencies of Western countries that are echoing it, are trying at the same time to sound out the actual Soviet stand on the possibility of restoring Soviet-Israeli diplomatic relations, severed since 1967.

The topic of Soviet-Israeli relations "to the detriment of the Arab cause" is also discussed by certain Arab, in particular, Egyptian, newspapers. Syrian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Farouk al Sharaa said the following on this score in an interview with the *Al-Moustaqbal* magazine: "Regrettably, some Arab mass media are attempting—deliberately or unintentionally—to cast doubt on the Soviet stand, which is friendly towards us and which is a manifestation of support for our just cause. Certain Arab scribblers have gone as far as to criticise the Soviet Union for having any contacts with Israel, while justifying the contacts with Israel undertaken by certain Arab leaders."

At the same time, the firm stand of the Soviet Union in support of the just struggle waged by the Arab peoples does not mean that this country is against maintaining relations with Israel on principle. We are not opposed to their normalisation; however, this will become possible only in the event of a major turn in the situation in the Middle East—a turn, of course, towards peace and security. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev stressed this at his press conference in Paris during his visit to France in October 1985. Tel Aviv's expansionism and the fact that it ignores the norms of international law still remain

the main obstacles on the road towards normalising the situation in the Middle East region.

At present, the developments in the Middle East show that the policy of Israel's ruling circles and major political forces has remained for the most part unchanged. Thus, the causes that determined the rupture of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel still continue to exist. It is, therefore, unrealistic to expect any changes in the Soviet approach to this question.

Has the USSR's approach to the complex of Middle East problems changed in connection with the Soviet-American summit meeting in Geneva on November 19-21, 1985?

Weakening the front of the all-Arab, anti-imperialist struggle by slandering the USSR and undermining Soviet-Arab friendship is a well-known technique of imperialism, Zionism, and pro-Western Arab circles.

Shortly before the meeting between Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan in Geneva, a veritable flood of anti-Soviet slander came down on the Arab East. Anti-Soviet tall tales, concocted mostly by the pro-Zionist propaganda, were also published by certain Arab periodicals. As part of that campaign, hostile towards the Soviet Union, the Middle East policies of the USSR and the United States were put on the same level and the thesis concerning a possible partition of the Middle East into spheres of influence in Geneva was brought up. These and other concoctions were to suggest to the Arabs the idea of a possible "Soviet-American deal" at the expense of Arab interests.

The whole of that campaign of lies and misinformation was staged in order to undermine the confidence of the Arabs in the success of their struggle for their national interests. This is what Washington and

Tel Aviv, seeking military-political domination in the Middle East, are striving for. They are assisted in this by the Arab conciliatory and defeatist circles whose participation in spreading anti-Soviet rumours is explained by their wish to justify their own conciliatory and treacherous line of action and their renunciation of the anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist struggle. While sowing distrust of Soviet policy among the Arabs, these circles are nurturing plans for new separate deals with the Israeli aggressor under the aegis of the United States. They try to convince the Arabs that they cannot count on any efficient support from the Soviet Union and that there is no other way available to the Arab East, except the way of former Egyptian President Sadat.

After the Geneva summit, those who had been trying to slander the USSR—a loyal and tested friend of the Arab peoples—got into a mess once again. Addressing a session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR soon after the Geneva negotiations, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and Deputy to the Supreme Soviet Mikhail Gorbachev said that his meeting with Ronald Reagan had shown that the Soviet and American approaches to the causes of regional conflicts, among which the Middle East conflict is the most protracted and dramatic one, and ways of settling them "are not just different—they are diametrically opposite". The Soviet leader called the approach of the United States, which is used to thinking in terms of "spheres of interests" and reduces regional problems to East-West rivalry, "an anachronism, a relapse of imperial thinking". He renounced the US stand, which "denies a majority of nations the right to think and make decisions independently", and condemned the hushing up by Washington of "Israel's outlaw acts in the Middle East".

Mikhail Gorbachev informed the Deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR that during the discussion of regional conflicts it was explained to the US President that we are for the recognition of the inalienable right of every people to freedom and independence, the right to choose its path of development independently. Our position is that this right should not be flouted by anyone, that there should be no attempts at outside interference, that freedom, not tyranny, should prevail. Mikhail Gorbachev had firmly and resolutely stressed during his talks with Ronald Reagan that we have been and remain on the side of peoples upholding their independence. This is our principled policy.

The Geneva summit is yet another testimony to the fact that the USSR has never wavered, nor will it ever waver, from the internationalist principles on which it builds its equal and disinterested relations with the Arab countries. The principled and consistent stand of the Soviet Union in support of the Arab struggle against Zionism and US imperialism and for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East is confirmed by its day-to-day foreign policy activities.

Appendix

THE SOVIET UNION'S PROPOSALS ON A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT

Being concerned over the continuing explosive situation in the Middle East, the Soviet Union is profoundly convinced that the vital interests of the peoples of that region, and likewise the interests of international security as a whole, urgently dictate the need for the speediest attainment of a comprehensive, just, and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict.

The USSR is likewise firmly convinced that such a comprehensive, truly just and really lasting settlement can be drawn up and implemented only through collective efforts, with the participation of all interested sides.

Proceeding from this and wishing to contribute to establishing peace in the Middle East, the USSR puts forward the following proposals on the principles of a Middle East settlement and ways towards reaching it.

Principles of a Middle East Settlement

1. The principle of the inadmissibility of capturing foreign lands through aggression should be strictly observed. Accordingly, all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967—the Golan Heights, the West Bank of the River Jordan and the Gaza Strip, and the Lebanese lands—should be restituted to the Arabs. The settlements established by Israel on the Arab

territories after 1967 should be eliminated. The borders between Israel and its Arab neighbours should be declared inviolable.

2. The realisation in practice should be ensured of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people, whose sole legitimate representative is the Palestine Liberation Organisation, to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent state on Palestinian lands—on the West Bank of the River Jordan and in the Gaza Strip—which will be freed from Israeli occupation. As envisioned by the resolution of the Arab Summit Conference in Fez and with the consent of the Palestinians themselves, the West Bank of the River Jordan and the Gaza Strip may be turned over by Israel and put under the control of the United Nations for a brief transition period of not more than several months.

After the formation of an independent Palestinian state, it will, naturally, itself, by virtue of the sovereign rights inherent in every state, determine the character of its relations with the neighbouring countries, including the possibility of forming a confederation.

The Palestinian refugees should be granted the opportunity envisioned by the UN decisions to return to their homes or to receive an appropriate compensation for the property they left behind.

3. The eastern part of Jerusalem, which was occupied by Israel in 1967 and which is the site of one of the main Muslim places of worship, should be restituted to the Arabs and become an integral part of the Palestinian state. The free access of all believers of the three religions to places of worship should be ensured all over Jerusalem.

4. The right of all states in the region to secure and independent existence and development should be ensured in reality—certainly, with the observance of full reciprocity, since the genuine security of some people cannot be ensured by flouting the security of others.

5. An end should be put to the state of war and peace established between the Arab states and Israel. This implies that all sides in the conflict, including Israel and the Palestinian state, should commit themselves to honour mutually each other's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, and to resolve disputes that arise through peaceful means, through negotiations.

6. International guarantees of the settlement should be drawn up and adopted, and the role of the guarantor could be assumed, for example, by the permanent members of the UN Security Council or the Security Council as a whole. The Soviet Union is ready to participate in such guarantees.

Ways Towards Reaching a Settlement

Experience has shown most convincingly the futility and, at the same time, the danger of attempts to resolve the Middle East problem by imposing on the Arabs all sorts of separate deals with Israel.

The sole correct and effective way towards ensuring radical solution of the Middle East problem is through the collective efforts of all interested sides, in other words, talks in the framework of an international conference on the Middle East specially convened for the purpose.

In the opinion of the Soviet Union, in convening such a conference it is necessary to be guided by the following provisions.

Aims of the Conference. The objective of the conference should be to find solutions to all aspects of a Middle East settlement in a single package. The conference should end with the signing of a treaty or treaties embracing the following organically interconnected component parts of the settlement: the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967; the exercise of the legitimate national rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including its right to the creation of its own state; the establishment of the state of peace and the ensurance of the security and independent development of all states that are sides in the conflict. Simultaneously, international guarantees for the observance of the terms of such a settlement should be drawn up and adopted. Together, all the agreements reached at the conference should make up an integral whole, and be approved by all of its participants.

Participants. All the Arab states that have common borders with Israel, that is, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon, and Israel itself should have the right to participate in the conference.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation should be an equal participant in the conference as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This is a matter of fundamental importance, since a Middle East settlement is unattainable without the solution of the Palestine problem, and this cannot be solved without the participation of the PLO.

The USSR and the USA should also participate in the conference as the states that play, by force of

circumstances, an important role in Middle East affairs and were cochairmen of the preceding conference on the Middle East.

Certain other states of the Middle East and of the areas adjoining it, capable of making a positive contribution to the solution of the Middle East problem, could be included into the list of participants in the conference with general consent.

Procedure of the Conference. Just as the preceding conference, the proposed conference should be held under the auspices of the United Nations.

The main form of work of the conference could be working groups (commissions) set up from among representatives of all the participants in the conference. These groups could examine the key issues of a settlement, such as the withdrawal of Israeli troops and the delimitation of borders; the Palestine problem, and the question of Jerusalem; the cessation of the state of war and the establishment of peace; the problem of ensuring the security of the states which were sides in the conflict; international guarantees for the observance of the agreements, etc.

If need be, bilateral groups could be set up for a detailed study of accords concerning the two sides alone.

To discuss the results of the working groups' (commissions') activity, and as the necessity arises in other cases, plenary meetings could be held to approve, by concensus, the decisions of the conference.

At the initial stage of the conference, the participating states could be represented by foreign ministers and, subsequently, by special envoys. In case

of need, foreign ministers could be summoned periodically to take part in the later stages of the conference.

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Seeking to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and to eliminate the explosive situation in that region, the Soviet Union appeals to all sides in the conflict to be guided in their actions by a sober-minded consideration of each other's legitimate rights and interests, and calls on all other states to encourage such a settlement, rather than to impede it.

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СССР И БЛИЖНЕВОСТОЧНОЕ УРЕГУЛИРОВАНИЕ
на английском языке
Цена 35 к.

The SOVIET UNION and a Middle East Settlement

Middle East and the Present-Day World

The Basic Principles
of a Middle East Settlement

An International Conference
and Its Participants

Camp David and Its Accords

US-Israeli "Strategic Cooperation"

The Lebanese Knot

The Role and Place
of the Palestine Liberation Organisation

The USSR and Israel

The Iran-Iraq War

The Persian Gulf

The Geneva Summit